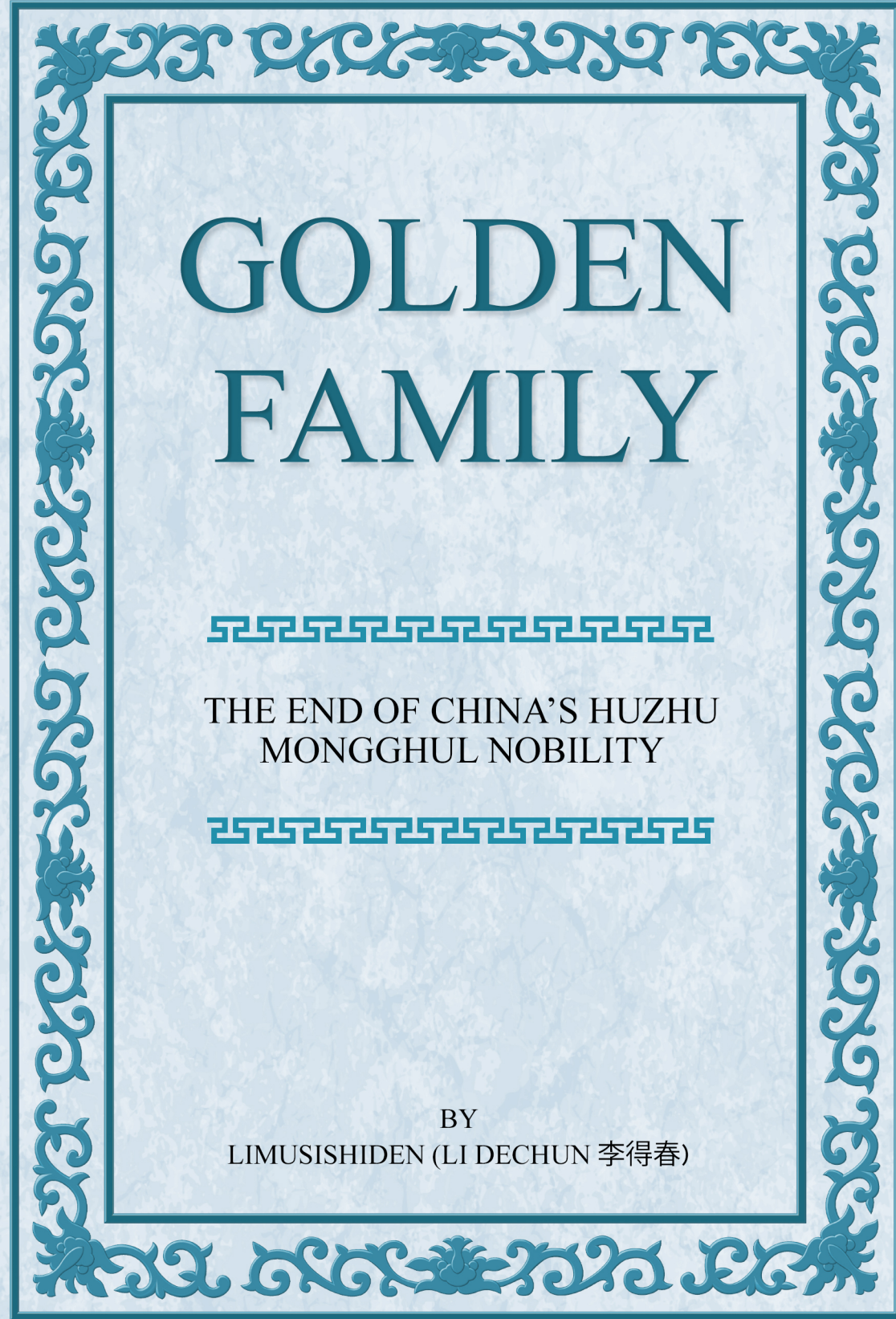




THE END OF CHINA'S HUZHU MONGGHUL NOBILITY

AHP 55



"GOLDEN FAMILY"

THE END OF CHINA'S HUZHU
MONGGHUL NOBILITY

"HALIDAN QINSANG"

Dunda Lusni Huzhu Mongghul
Niiwangini Qinsangni Burasanni

by

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春)

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ILLUSTRATORS

hda (b. 1971), Tu (Mongghul), is a primary school teacher from Janba Village, Danma Town, Huzhu County. He created the first fifteen illustrations

hda (1971 fandi turaja), Mongghul, Huzhu Xan, Darima Zhinni Janba Ayilini kunna. Mula surighualingini baghaxiwa. Gan ne muxigu haran-tawun mayogni hualaja.

usiqi (b. 1974) is a Mongghul farmer from Smee Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County. He created the remaining illustrations.

usiqi (1974 fandi turaja), Huzhu Xan, Wuxi Zhinni Smee Ayilini lisigaqinga. Gan ne huinagu yiigua mayogni hualasanna.

MAPS

Figure One. Map of Qinghai Province, China.¹




¹ An edited version of <https://bit.ly/2zJb3Wg>, accessed 12 November 2018.

Figure Two. Donghe Township, Huzhu Tu (Mongghul) Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, China.²



² An edited version of <https://bit.ly/2Ps2c5V>, accessed 12 November 2018.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

his novel is about a sub-group of one of China's fifty-six officially recognized ethnic groups called "Tu." The specific group of Tu this narrative focuses on are the Mongghul, a linguistically and culturally distinct group in Qinghai Province. Huzhu County, located in China's northwestern Qinghai Province is the only Tu ethnic autonomous county in China and is where most Tu live and where nearly all the Mongghul live.³

According to Huzhu Tu Autonomous County's official website,⁴ as reported in 2013, the Tu population in Huzhu County was 62,745. For that same year, Qinghai Province's total Tu population was 204,413.⁵ In the year 2000, China's total Tu population was 241,200.⁶

Located in east-central Qinghai, the Mongghul are deeply influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and speak dialects that have many similarities to the Mongolian language. While practicing Tibetan Buddhism, the Mongghul also venerate a variety of deities.

The origins of the Mongghul are contested. Some scholars suggest that Mongghul are Mongol descendants. Others argue that Mongghul are descendants of the Xianbei/Tuyuhun. Based on my knowledge and research from 1989 to 2017, I support the view that Mongghul are Mongol descendants.

Juha Janhunen, an internationally recognized expert on Mongolic issues, writes (Janhunen 2003:287):⁷ Little is known about

³ Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County and Datong Hui and Tu Autonomous County are also located in Qinghai Province. Huzhu Tu Autonomous County is the only county in China exclusively designated as a Tu autonomous county. Other areas with significant Tu populations include Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County and Shaowa Tu Township, Zhuoni County, Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province.

⁴ <https://bit.ly/2NwAlvK>, accessed 17 March 2013.

⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/yawm7j fz>, accessed 17 March 2013.

⁶ <http://bit.ly/2wds5Jp>, accessed 3 August 2017.

⁷ I made minor edits to this quotation.

the early history of the Mongghul, but it seems safe to assume that the current Mongolic presence in Qinghai does not antedate the occupation of the region by Mongol troops in 1227. When the Yuan Dynasty fell in 1368, the ancestors of the present-day Mongghul and Mangghuer, who apparently shared much of their history until premodern times, instead of following other Mongol groups back to the northern homeland beyond the Great Wall, declared themselves loyal to the Ming, and later to the Qing. From Ming times onward, they were known as borderguards in the vicinity of Lanzhou. The fact that they early adopted the lifestyle of sedentary agriculturalists is likely to have been instrumental in their ethnic, linguistic, and ideological separation from the traditional nomadic society of the Mongols.

This is my second novel.⁸ I wrote the first draft in both Weiyuan Town, Huzhu County, and in Xining City from September 2016 to January 2017. In this novel, I focus on the last Tughuan Nangsuu (explained later), who was a monk when he was a child, but later as a young adult, broke rules and was expelled from the monastery. Nevertheless, the celebrated Tughuan Living Buddha subsequently authorized his appointment to the position of Tughuan Nangsuu in Tughuan Village in today's Wushi Town, replacing his old, sick father.

Before saying more about the story, we must understand the term *nangsuu/angsuo*, a key concept in this book. The former is the oral form. The latter is the Chinese written version. During the Wanli period (1573-1619) of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the *tughuan angsuo* 'internal affairs officer' position was granted by upper-level Tibetan religious authorities to Mongghul. There were three *angsuo* in Huzhu: Tuhun Angsuo (Tuguan Angsuo),⁹ Xiawaer Angsuo,¹⁰ and

⁸ "Passions and Colored Sleeves: Mongghul Lives in Eastern Tibet" was published by *Asian Highlands Perspectives* (2010).

⁹ Tuhun (Tughuan, Tuguan), a village located in today's Tughuan Village, Wushi Town.

¹⁰ Xiawaer (Xewarishidi), a village located in today's Xewarishidi Village, Songduo Township.

Zhade Angsuo.¹¹ Monks were eligible for this hereditary position. They separately governed the contemporary Hongyazigou and Halazhigou townships, and Wushi Town. The *angsuo* system was abolished in 1930 when Huzhu County was established (Yan and Wang 1994:864, Limusishiden and Stuart 2010:67).

Historical Tughuan Nangsuu's subjects are written into this novel. A series of practices that occurred between Monk Nangsuu and certain subjects are revealed in great detail to illustrate their struggle to separate from Monk Nangsuu's dominion. A detailed explanation is also given about how the key Mongghul monastery, Rgulang, was established after the local heads of thirteen tribes visited Tibet to request permission to build it.

I go on to elaborate the historical background and stories of Tughuan Village¹² and its people. Furthermore, the construction of Tughuan Nangsuu's Mansion, its structure, interior layout, the jail, criminal trials, and private deities are shown in detail. Also included are certain religious rituals that were held annually in Nangsuu Mansion, including the Tughuan people's circumambulation of their territory and shamanic rites.

A significant part of the novel involves Layinsuu and Jiraqog (two Mongghul women) coming to Monk Nangsuu's Mansion from different areas to make their lives. Both had alcoholic fathers. Initially, they were servants in the Mansion, but later when grown up, they became full members of the household after becoming adoptive daughters to Monk Nangsuu's nephews, Zanan and Mamadii.

Layinsuu and Jiraqog both had their own beloved men, acknowledged when the two were making their lives in the Mansion. However, Monk Nangsuu and his household refused to allow them to marry the men they loved. Instead, they were ordered to marry the sons of Monk Nangsuu's nephew. Layinsuu married Limusairang,

¹¹ Zhade (also Zhuashidi), a village located in today's Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town.

¹² Tughuan Village is further divided into Upper Tughuan Village and Lower Tughuan hamlets by the villagers themselves.

and Jiraqog married Hgunqogsirang. Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang were brothers. Because of the shortage of boys at Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion, the two brothers were extremely spoiled. They became local despots, doing evil and stopping at nothing. They did not love their wives and treated them badly.

In August 1930, the Huzhu County Government was established and in the fall of that year, it abolished the *nangsuu* system. Monk Nangsuu lost his power and all his subjects, leaving him greatly dispirited. A couple of years later, under threats from Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang, all the Mansion's property including houses, furniture, cultivated and grazing lands, trees, and livestock were divided. After moving out of the Mansion, Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang abandoned their wives, Layinsuu and Jiraqog.

After Monk Nangsuu died, Layinsuu and Jiraqog happily continued contact with their former lovers as if they were "couples," even though these men were married and had children.

The Tughuan Nangsuu position had been passed down for more than ten generations. Monk Nangsuu was the last.

In writing this novel, many traditional practices and stories are described and now documented, including traditional Mongghul folkloric items, religious and cursing practices, traditional headdresses and costumes, crafts, food, drinking customs, liquor, songs, dances, rituals, deities, agricultural lore, naming rituals, love song meetings, love and marriage, wedding ceremonies, death and funeral customs, hunting, herding, law and justice, family conflicts, and land taxes.

Before setting out to write this novel in late 2016 I spent about two years collecting Tughuan Nangsuu related stories from Nangsuu's family descendants, Tughuan villagers, and residents of villages near Tughuan. The novel is a testimony to Mongghul culture and history that is increasingly being lost and forgotten. A key motivation in writing this novel is to reflect on and recall this vanishing culture. In 2017, Tughuan Nangsuu's castle was still preserved, but the Nangsuu stories had nearly vanished.

In documenting Mongghul culture in this novel, I have tried to provide a record of fading Mongghul culture for future generations of Mongghul and anyone else who might be interested.

NOTES



To make it easier for the reader to understand this novel, I want to explain several key cultural aspects and terms.

PURGHAN

A *purghan* (or *pram*) is a deity represented in the form of either an image in a sedan that is held by four men or a cloth-covered pole held by a single man. Permeating Mongghul life, the *purghan* is readily available for consultation and represents the possibility that the supplicants' distress may be alleviated. It is consulted to identify a suitable spouse, treat illness, exorcize evil, ensure well-being and good harvests, and alleviate droughts. In the case of either a sedan or pole *purghan*, moving forward is affirmative while moving backward is negative. A spear *purghan*¹³ moves up and down in the hands of those who hold it to signify a positive answer. *Purghan* communicates through interaction between an elder who asks questions and a man who holds the sedan poles or the pole.

The *purghan* may belong to an individual household or be shared by a village. Each household has a commodious *purghan* room in the family compound that consists of several adobe rooms built around high, tamped-earth enclosing walls. The *purghan* wears a monk's robe under which is a Chinese-style unlined garment. Clothing colors included red, yellow, pink, and green.

More generally, *purghan* means 'deities'.

¹³ A spear *purghan* is a one to two-meter-long iron spear with a tip. Clad with a Chinese-style unlined garment, it is twined with colorful cloth and thread.

TUGHUAN NANGSUU MANSION'S TWO *PURGHAN*

Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion had their own private *purghan*. One was Xuanglang Liuya, originally known as Tughuan Liuya (a female deity), and worshipped by all Tughuan Village residents and enshrined in a village temple. When Tughuan Nangsuu later became an official, he designated the Tughuan deity as his family's deity and enshrined it in his mansion.

Tughuan Nangsuu's subjects lived in the Xuanglang area, which is today's Kema Village, Donghe Township. The subjects there were the furthestmost from the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. At one time, they had no deity to protect them. Learning of this, Nangsuu generously gave Tughuan Liuya to them.

Many years later a brave man wanting to end the historical relationship between his clan and Nangsuu, refused to pay land tax to Tughuan Nangsuu. One night, after they had finally become independent from Tughuan Nangsuu, Nangsuu sent several men to the Xuanglang area to take Tughuan Liuya. The deity was then returned to and enshrined in Nangsuu Mansion and renamed Xuanglang Liuya.

The other deity in the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion was Gunbuquxjang (Six-Arm Mahakala, Daheitiashen), appliquéed in dark colors with a fierce-looking appearance. It was a *tankari*,¹⁴ a form of Tibetan sacred representation consisting of a painted, embroidered, or appliquéed image panel, often placed in a textile frame. Such panels depict various mandalas, deities, famous scenes, or prominent local religious personalities. *Tankari* were hung up high in monastic halls, village temples, and family homes as objects of veneration. A piece of silk often hung over the image to prevent defilement by secular life and protected the image from light and dust. In the context of a village ritual, setting up images created interior and exterior worlds mediated through the representation of the image (Limusishiden et al. 2013:129).

¹⁴ T, *thang ka/thang ga*.

The two deities were consulted regarding all the affairs and problems of the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion and their subjects. The Tughuan Nangsuu family members worshipped the two deities in the Mansion.

FOUR BUDDHAS VENERATED IN THE MONGGHUL AREA

Four important Buddhas are venerated in the Mongghul area and piously worshipped by Mongghul. They are so important that certain locals say that homage should first be paid to these four Buddhas before journeying to Lhasa to worship. Every year, Tibetans from Haibei, Hainan, and Gilog (Mgo log, Guoluo) Tibetan autonomous prefectures visit Huzhu on a pilgrimage to the four temples and Rgulang Monastery. Tughuan Tirijijinbu (Thu'u ru gcen po), Zhuashidi Zhunmaasangqan (Sgrol ma seng chen), Wughuang Jiushidengunbu (Shug Idan mgon po), and Xewarishidi Wughuangmiile flew to the Huzhu Mongghul area from the Potala and lived in the temples of Tughuan (Tirijijinbu), and Wughuang (Jiushidengunbu) villages, Wushi Town; Zhuashidi (Zhunmaasangqan) Village, Danma Town; and Xewarishidi (Wughuangmiile) Village, Songduo Township (Limuzhunmaa; Limusishiden and Stuart 2010:67-68).

THE SEVEN VALLEYS

Duluun Lunkuang 'seven valleys' or 'seven jurisdictions' refers to territory administered by Rgulang Monastery before 1949. Most residents within the territory are considered to be Mongghul. The seven valleys are Danma, Wushi, Donggou, Dongshan, Weiyuan, Dala (located in today's Ledu Region), and Dongxia Township (located in Datong Hui and Mongghul Autonomous County).

THE HISTORICAL FULAA NARA AND HALIQI REGIONS

Mongghul in the Huzhu area were historically divided into Haliqi (meaning unknown) and Fulaan Nara (Red Sun). Haliqi includes the present Danma, Donggou, Weiyuan, Taizi, and Dongshan townships. Fulaan Nara refers to Wushi, Songduo, and Hongyazigou townships (Huzhu County) and Shdara Township (Ledu Region).

Fulaan Nara is located northeast of the Dongyuan Mountains while Haliqi is southwest of the same mountains. Fulaan Nara residents refer to themselves as Karilang, while people in Haliqi refer to themselves as Mongghul. There are slight differences between dialects and dress in the two areas.

PEI: HISTORICAL MONGGHUL EATING/SLEEPING PLATFORM

Pei refers to a raised eating/sleeping platform where the whole family slept at night (using wool-lined sheepskin robes as quilts) and entertained guests with food, liquor, and conversation.

Traditionally, Mongghul used a *pei* in the kitchen, which was divided into two parts by the *langang* or low wall. One part was for cooking, and the other was where the *pei* was located. The *pei* was made of adobe bricks and heated by heat from the kitchen fire passing through channels to the chimney or a fire fueled by animal dung and straw that burned in the center of the *pei*. People sat around the fire atop the *pei* during winter and boiled tea over a smoky, tear-inducing blaze.

The *pei* was wonderful in winter. Felt rugs were spread on it. Folded and piled covers and skins used at night were stacked along the wall where, also, a few different-sized wood chests were lined up containing the family's clothes; the mother's needle box, sewing materials, and so on; *taligha* 'roasted highland barley flour', home-distilled liquor, and utensils. Along the wall, hanging on pegs

were a rifle, a stringed musical instrument, and clothes (Limusishiden and Jugui 2010:26-27).

By the year 2000, the *pei* had completely disappeared from Mongghul society.

YIKANG AND BANKANG: HISTORICAL MONGGHUL BEDROOMS

Historically, a Mongghul bedroom was created by an adobe platform divided into a *yikang* (for males) and a *bankang* (for the females and babies). Both were made of adobe bricks. An opening at the center of the *bankang* into which fuel, straw and animal dung could be put, made it easier to heat. Once the fuel was put inside, the opening could be covered with five to six planks that could be removed a couple of days later. The *yikang* was heated by a stove from outside the room.

The father and the sons of the family slept on the felt-covered *yikang*, while the wife, daughters, and babies slept on the *bankang* without a bed cushion. This allowed the baby's urine to easily flow into the *bankang* and their excrement could easily be scraped and put inside too. Sleeping on a *bankang* is uncomfortable. There is no cushion beneath the body and it emits smoke. Babies occasionally fell into the *bankang* through the uneven planks and were seriously burned.

While the *bankang* had completely vanished from Mongghul areas by the year 2000, the *yikang* was still evident in 2017, in the houses of some old people because elder Mongghul are accustomed to sleeping on it and prefer it. It is also cheaper than an electric blanket in winter.

SHANGZI: A VARIABLE VOLUME UNIT

In the past, Mongghul used *shangzi* (C, *shengzi*), a variable volume unit, to fill or measure grain. Generally made with five trapezoidal wood planks, the top is square and open without a lid. The base is smaller than the top.

Historically, there were three *shangzi* of different sizes. The *shge* 'big' *shangzi* contained about 7.5 kilograms of grain. It had a base perimeter of about 120 centimeters and a height of about thirty centimeters.

The *mula* 'small' *shangzi* contained about five kilograms of grain. Its base perimeter was about eighty centimeters and the height was around twenty centimeters.

The *goai shangzi* contained about a half-kilo of grain.

One *mu*¹⁵ of farmland required about two and a half *shangzi* of grain during spring seeding (approximately 2.5 kilos). The size of farmland was estimated by the *shangzi* required to seed it.

NIUDAARI: TRADITIONAL MONGGHUL WOMEN'S HEADDRESS

Niudaari is a traditional headdress that was worn by Mongghul women. In 1938, the ruling Ma Family government forced Mongghul women to stop wearing distinctive Mongghul clothing. Afterward, the *niudaari* 'headdress' gradually disappeared. The four types of *niudaari* were Tughuan *niudaari*, *boqi* 'winnowing tray' *niudaari*, *njasi* 'plow' *niudaari*, and *shge* 'big' *niudaari*.¹⁶

The Tughuan *niudaari* was worn only by the women in the region under the jurisdiction of the Tughuan Living Buddha. This *niudaari* was made of paper and easily damaged by rain, which is why local Han passersby urged each other to hurry when they saw Mongghul women rushing back to their homes from the fields - a sign

¹⁵ One *mu* = 0.067 hectare.

¹⁶ See Schram (2006:6-8).

of imminent rain (Limusishiden and Stuart 2010:58).

TUSI: MONGGHUL LOCAL CHIEF

The *tusi* administrative system was used in Mongol, Tibetan, and other minority areas in northwest and southwest China during the Yuan (1206-1368), Ming (1368-1644), and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties (Yan and Wang 1994:863). The government designated tribal officials and allowed them to govern their own ethnic peoples. Yuan Dynasty tribal leaders were granted numerous titles and established as officials such as the *fu* 'government office', *zhou* 'prefecture', and *xian* 'county' levels.

Tusi were responsible to the central government for contributions and requisition and also exercised traditional power in their respective local areas. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the area of contemporary Qinghai had more than sixty *tusi*. There were forty *tusi* in the contemporary Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The remaining *tusi* controlled the present Minhe, Ledu, Ping'an, Xunhua, and Huzhu counties, Haidong City; and Huangzhong and Datong counties in Xining City (including Xining). In 1931, the *tusi* system was abrogated in agricultural areas, and former officers became landlords. The *tusi* system in herding areas lasted until the period of democratic reform in 1958.¹⁷

HGURIDEN: A SPIRIT MEDIUM

A *hguriden* is a man who is a spirit medium for *purghan*. The local Han term for *hguriden* is *fala*. The *hguriden* burned incense and prostrated to the *purghan* either inside or outside the home to which he was invited. The *purghan* then possessed him. While in a trance,

¹⁷ Yan and Wang (1994:863), translated by Chen Qiang.

he responded to questions people asked but afterward had no memory of this trance period. The *hguriden* wore a red or green Chinese-style upper garment tied around the waist by two or three pieces of red or green cloth. The *hguriden* identified evils while in trance (Limusishiden and Jugui 2010:200). By 2017, *hguriden* had completely disappeared from Mongghul areas.

THE HISTORICAL MONGGHUL *BOG* RITUAL

The main activity of this communal *bog* ritual involved deities and ancestral souls being invited to a sumptuous "banquet" where religious practitioners, called *bog/fashi*, chanted scriptures, sang, danced, joked, and burned incense to delight the "guests." By delighting both human and non-human participants, Mongghul hoped to ensure peace and prosperity for the entire community during the coming year.

Bog also referred to a religious practitioner who interposed between men and spirits, either as a friend of each, in the case of good spirits, or as a protector of men in the case of evil spirits. He was possessed by spirits he gathered in his drum. They sometimes spoke through him, calling up other spirits that he saw and heard talking in his drum, and with which he was able to communicate (Limusishiden and Roche 2016:35-74).

The *bog* ritual was discontinued in Tughuan Village in about the year 2000.

BURNING SOIL, MAKING FERTILIZER

The first step in *dangghuali xra* 'clod burning' was done by livestock trampling land that was still moist from rain. After a few days of sunshine, when the trampled earth turned hard, the soil on the surface was shoveled into bricks that were again sundried. Some days

later, they were stacked into a big pile in the center of the field. Livestock dung and straw were placed inside this pile. Several holes were made at the bottom of the pile allowing for ventilation once the dung and straw were lit. After smoldering for two to three days, the bricks became red and soft. They were then pounded into ash and piled up to be used during the next planting season.

Before plowing and seeding, the ash was carried in baskets to the fields and spread as fertilizer.

LANGUAGES

I give Mongghul written forms where appropriate. Certain of these terms are closely related to Chinese and Tibetan. The Chinese dialect spoken in Huzu differs from Modern Standard Chinese (MSC) and I have attempted to write the local Chinese in Pinyin, which may differ from MSC. See Selected Non-English Terms for more detail.

Figure Three. Characters in the Novel.

Name	Sex	Birth Place	Relationship to Monk Nangsuu
Aniruu	male	Tughuan	a Tughuan villager
Monk Nangsuu (Mongghul name, Ruuzhu)	male	Tughuan	has the powerful local position of Tughuan Nangsuu in Tughuan Village and is master of the Mansion
Danjanhua	female	unclear	a bride married into Tughuan Village
Dunqog	male	Jilog	a prisoner from Jilog Village, Monk Nangsuu's subject
Duriji	male	Niuqi	head of the Niuqi Clan, Monk Nangsuu's subjects
Galazang	male	Niuqi	son of Duriji
Gindinsirang	male	Tughuan	Monk Nangsuu's commoner from Tughuan Village
Gunbudunzhu	male	Tughuan	son of Monk Nangsuu and Liuyansuu
Gunbuniruu and later renamed	male	Tughuan	Layinsuu and Limusairang's son

Nengnengbog			Wuxihua and Zanan's grandson, great-grandson of Monk Nangsuu
Hgunqog	male	Tughuan	Monk Nangsuu's middle nephew, married to Layajii. They have four sons.
Hgunqogsirang	male	Tughuan	Hgunqog's third son (notoriously lazy), marries Jiraqog
Jiraqog	female	Rangdin, Haliqi	Rnqanhua's daughter and a servant in Monk Nangsuu's mansion. Later she becomes Mamadii's adopted daughter and later wife to one of Hgunqog's sons, Hgunqosirang.
Lamukari	female	unclear	Limusirang's wife and mother of Lasizisirang
Lamusirang	male	Pudang	Monk Nangsuu's subject
Lasizisirang	male	Luxuu	son of Limusirang and Lamukari. Married to Qixangsuu.
Laxja	male	Maqang	Monk Nangsuu's powerful, brutal jailer who grew up in Nangsuu Mansion. Lover to

			Jiraqog and later marries Limuqog.
Layajii	female	unclear	wife of Hgunqog, Monk Nangsuu's middle nephew
Layinsuu	female	Jughuari	a servant in Monk Nangsuu's mansion. Later she becomes adopted 'daughter' to Zanan and then marries Limusairang, one of the the sons of Monk Nangsuu's nephew, Hqungog.
Limujansan	male	Tughuan	Hgunqog's fourth son
Limuqog	female	Jangja	Qiyansuu's daughter and only child who later becomes Laxja's wife
Limusairang	male	Tughuan	Hgunqog's second son marries Layinsuu
Limusirang	male	Luxuu	Luxuu Clan head, one of Monk Nangsuu's most loyal clan heads, Lamukari's husband, and a weaver
Lirixjinsuu	female	unclear	Lamukari's brother's daughter

Liuyahua	female	unclear	a servant in Monk Nangsuu's mansion
Liuyansuu, also known as Aunt Nangsuu	female	Wuxi Village	Monk Nangsuu's first wife
Mamadii	male	Tughuan	Monk Nangsuu's youngest nephew, married to Srinsuu, adoptive parents of Jiraqog
Manlan	male	unclear	Monk Nangsuu's friend when they were at Rgulang Monastery
Niidoxji	female	unclear	a bride married into Tughuan Village
Niimanzin	male	Darima	head of the Darima Clan, subjects of Monk Nangsuu
Niruu	male	unclear	Monk Nangsuu's servant
Qixangsuu	female	Niuqi	daughter of Duriiji, head of Monk Nangsuu's Niuqi subjects. Married Lasizisirang at the age of fourteen.
Qiyansuu	female	unclear	Laxja's aunt
Rnqan	male	unclear	Monk Nangsuu's servant

Rnqanhua	female	Rangdin, Haliqi	Jiraqog's mother and a servant in Monk Nangsuu's mansion
Rnqansuu	female	Niuqi	wife of Duriiji
Rnqaxji	female	Niuqi	first daughter of the head of Monk Nangsuu's Niuqi subjects. She did not marry. Instead, she lived in her parents' home and, after a ritual, was allowed to have lovers and bear children. Her children were unknown to and unacknowledged by their fathers.
Sairang	male	Tughuan	Monk Nangsuu's commoner from Tughuan Village
Sangjijaxi	male	Tughuan	Hgunqog's first son
Sishihua	female	Xemeri	a Mongghul woman who becomes Monk Nangsuu's second wife
Srangsuu (Old Lady)	female	unclear	Monk Nangsuu's mother
Tayisirang	male	Jilog	Jilog Tribe head, Monk Nangsuu's subject
Srinsuu	female	unclear	wife of Mamadii, Monk

			Nangsuu's youngest nephew
Warimasirang	male	Darima	a warrior in the Darima Clan; and a good painter, farmer, speaker, and organizer
Wuxihua	female	unclear	wife of Zanan, Monk Nangsuu's oldest nephew, and Layinsuu's adoptive mother
Xewarishidi Nangsuu	male	Xewarishidi	a Mongghul, he wore a black felt hat, a long silk-fabric robe, and a pair of glasses that featured large round lenses of dark crystal
Yiila	male	Tughuan	a Tughuan villager
Zanan	male	Tughuan	Monk Nangsuu's oldest nephew, married to Wuxihua. They are Layinsuu's adoptive parents.
Zhuashidi Nangsuu		Zhuashidi	a Tibetan, he wore a blue round hat and a new satin gown.
Zhaxi	male	Tughuan	nephew of one of Monk Nangsuu's cousins

Figure Four. Place Names.

Name	Village	Town/Township in Huzhu County
Darima	Darima	Danma Town
Haliqi		the present Danma, Donggou, Weiyuan, Taizi, and Dongshan townships
Fulaan Nara		the present Wushi, Songduo, and Hongyazigou townships (Huzhu County) and Shdara Township (Ledu Region)
Duluun Lunkuang		territory administered by Rgulang Monastery before 1949. Residents within the territory are considered Mongghul. Danma, Wushi, Donggou, Dongshan, Weiyuan, and Dala (located in today's Ledu Region) and Dongxia Township (located in Datong Hui and Mongghul Autonomous County) are the seven valleys.
Luxuu	Luxuu	Donggou Township
Rangdin	Rangdin	Donggou Township
Gantan	Gantan	Wushi Town
Kuilog	Kuilog	Wushi Town
Szu	Anding	Weiyuan Town

Jughuari	Jughuari	Wushi Town
Maqang	Maqang	Hongyazigou Township
Jilog	Jilog	Danma Town
Niuqi	Niuqi	Hongyazigou Township
Xanjang	Xanjang	Danma Town
Jangja	Jangja	Hongyazigou Township
Zanghgua	Zanghgua	Wushi Town

Figure Five. Deities.

Deity Name	Sex	Areas Where Worshipped
Niidosang refers to a particular spear <i>purghan</i> generally regarded as a protector in Mongghul areas. It is the only <i>purghan</i> devoutly believed in by nearly all Mongghul.	male	Darima Village, Danma Town. Luxuu Village, Donggou Township.
Xuanglang Liuya Small Female <i>purghan</i> (previously known as Tughuan Liuya)	female	Monk Nangsuu's mansion
Gunbuquxjang (Six-Arm Mahakala Daheitiānshēn), appliquéd in dark colors with a fierce-looking appearance	male	Monk Nangsuu's mansion .
Big Female Deity <i>purghan</i> (also known as Shge Liuya Deity)	female	Tughuan villages and Wuxi Village
Small Female <i>purghan</i>	female	Tughuan villages and Wuxi Village

Figure Six. Buddhas.

Buddha Name		Area Where Worshipped
Zhuashidi	female	Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town.
Zhunmaasangqan/ Sgrol ma seng chen - Green Tara		Zhuashidi Zhunmaasangqan (Zhuashidi is a place name located in today's Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town. "Zhunmaa" refers to Green Tara, <i>sang</i> refers to "words" and <i>qan</i> suggests "say" or "speak." The overall meaning is "Green Tara in the Zhuashidi area who is able to speak." This image of Green Tara is made of copper and is the size of an adult man's thumb.
Wughuang Jiushidengunbu (Shug Idan mgon po)	male	Worshipped in Wughuang Village, Wushi Town. Originally a high-ranking lama in Tibet, he became a Buddha after his death, flew to the Wughuang area, and was found by an old Mongghul woman who worshipped him in her family shrine. The image of this Buddha is made of clay and is about the length of a man's thumb. People pray to this Buddha for good fortune and a good next life.

Xewarishidi Wughuangmiile	male	<p>worshipped in Xewarishidi Village, Songduo Township</p> <p>Originally, this Buddha flew to the village from Tibet. The image is about one meter in height and made of a wood that no locals can identify. People pray to this Buddha for good fortune and a good next life.</p>
Tirijijinbu (Shadakshari Lokeshvara)	female	<p>worshipped in Tughuan Village, Wushi Town.</p> <p>People pray to him for safety and a good next life.</p>
Luosangladan (First Tughuan Living Buddha)	male	<p>Born in the Tughuan Villages area, Wushi Town. In 1672, Blo bzang la brtan (? – 1679) was elected the <i>dafatai</i> 'abbot' of Rgulang Monastery (Anonymous 1993:567, Limusishiden and Stuart 2010:66-67). Tughuan villagers call all the successive incarnations of Tughuan Living Buddha "Hgunqog," a name given by his parents to the first generation of Tughuan Living Buddha.</p>

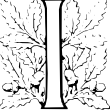
<p>Luo Zhang Quejinima (the third generation of the Tughuan Living Buddha)</p>	male	<p>Born in the Sanglang area, in Huarai,¹⁸ he was an influential figure at the Qing Court. His many writings included the <i>Rgulang Monastery Chronicles</i> and historical-philosophical works.</p>
<p>Jiase¹⁹ Living Buddha</p>	male	<p>From Tibet, his birth and death dates are unclear. He was sent to supervise the construction of Rgulang Monastery.</p>

¹⁸ Huarai/Dpa' ris refers to today's Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province, and Huzhu Mongghul Autonomous County, Qinghai Province.

¹⁹ Jiase = Rgyal sras don yod chos kyi rgya mtsho, Jiaseduanyuequjijiacuo.

1

MONK NANGSUU VISITS HIS SUBJECTS

t was a very dark night in the year 1890. All was quiet, except for the heavy breathing and clip-clop of the mule led by Layinsuu, who walked back and forth in the lane just in front of Monk Nangsuu's mansion. Whenever Monk Nangsuu was planning to travel a long distance, Layinsuu had to walk his mule the night before. She had done this many, many times before.

Hearing the first rooster crow in the distance, Layinsuu immediately realized that it was already midnight, which gave her enough encouragement to continue to walk the mule, ensuring it would have enough stamina to carry its master the required distance the next day. Eventually, she led the mule to the stable located at the north end of the courtyard and added fodder and peas to a trough there.

Thinking she should soon prepare breakfast for Monk Nangsuu, she didn't return to the room where she slept. Instead, she walked along the corridor to an adjoining courtyard where the kitchen rooms were on the east side. Three jail cells were on the west side of this courtyard. Gently opening the kitchen door, she sat down and leaned against piled straw near the hearth. She was soon asleep. The banked embers in the hearth warmed her fatigued body.

When the roosters crowed a second time, Layinsuu woke up as usual. Monk Nangsuu's family had many visitors daily, so sleeping in the kitchen room was very common. Layinsuu was accustomed to this daily schedule. When important guests arrived, Monk Nangsuu chatted, sang, and drank homemade highland barley liquor²⁰ with them. Layinsuu boiled tea, cooked, and endlessly filled their tea bowls.

²⁰ *Miinliu* 'homemade highland barley liquor'.

If she became very tired, she took a short nap. Only when the host and guests retired late at night could she go to bed. Occasionally, if the guests and Monk Nangsuu became very excited, talking, laughing and drinking continued until dawn.

On this day, at daybreak, Monk Nangsuu was awakened by his loyal servant, Rnqan. Together they had a breakfast of roasted highland barley flour, butter, milk tea, and bread. Monk Nangsuu then mounted his fine, well-equipped mule and began his journey with Rnqan and another family servant, Niruu.

It was the middle of the seventh lunar month. The yellow flowers of the small, short colza plant had fallen to the ground and its stalks were turning hard and fading, losing their green color. Wheat was becoming the color of straw and the kernels hardening. Farmers had begun digging potatoes from one side of their fields to the other. Every now and then fat pheasants marched out of one field and swaggered into another. A flock of sparrows flew to a wheat field and stayed overnight, busily filling their stomachs. Wuxi River's clean water slowly flowed from the valley's north to the south.

Monk Nangsuu shrugged and whipped his mule, urging it to move faster. His attention once again returned to the purpose of this special journey. His subjects in Darima Village in the Haliqi area hadn't paid land tax to his estate the past year despite a bumper harvest. Over the years fewer had visited which suggested a waning loyalty. There were rumors that Darima subjects were planning to end the relationship with their chief, Nangsuu, even though they had been loyal to the occupants of the *nangsuu* position for centuries.

The three travelers descended the Rdangyan Mountains and passed several Mongghul women weeding by the path and some men herding sheep on the slope. As they came near, people came to the path and knelt.

"Go ask who they are," ordered Monk Nangsuu.

Rnqan and Niruu dismounted their mules and walked forward. Monk Nangsuu pulled his own mule to a stop.

"How are you uncles?" one old man asked Niruu and Rnqan.

"Oh, Grandfather Lamusirang! It's you! How are you?" greeted Niruu who returned to Monk Nangsuu, reporting that they were subjects from Pudang Villages.

Monk Nangsuu walked forward, told them all to stand up, and greeted them saying, "How are you, my dear people?"

"We're all good. Thank you, our Lord! Everything is fine in our village. The crops are growing particularly well this year," the old man said pointing to the crops nearby.

Warmly refusing his subjects' invitation to visit their homes, Monk Nangsuu said goodbye and the three resumed their journey. Monk Nangsuu smiled, his face shining with joy at the thought of such loyal subjects.

Out of Pudang Valley, they journeyed north until, about an hour later, two old and tall willow trees appeared before them. These trees were about fifty meters apart and many large roots had come to the surface of the earth. The trunks of the old trees were so large that it took four or five adult men to encircle each tree. In crevices created by some dry branches, mushrooms had grown among the moss, while branches spread luxuriously underneath the foliage. Local villagers had built stone rings around the bases to collect rain to water the two "spirit" trees. Some dry twigs snapped off by the wind lay on the stone-circles. Bits of cotton cloth and sheep wool were tied onto the tree.

Monk Nangsuu knew his subjects in Darima Village had protected the two "spirit" trees by treating them with great care. It was taboo to break off twigs or branches or to cut the trees in any way. His subjects believed the two sacred trees suppressed evil and protected the village from disease, drought, hailstorms, and other natural disasters.

An adobe brick stage had been constructed at one side of the holy trees. During the annual Darima Love Song Meeting held from the eleventh to fifteenth days of the sixth lunar month in Darima Village, folksongs telling of historical or legendary episodes, or romantic stories narrate historical or legendary incidents, or

romantic stories, were performed on this simple stage. Mongghul throughout the Seven Valleys gathered to enjoy themselves. Few people paid much attention to the opera performances, preferring instead to parade back and forth on the paths among the huge crowd, make small purchases, and sing love songs. It was a much-anticipated opportunity for Mongghul to display their colorful, embroidered clothing.

"Look, Darima subjects are already waiting for us!" exclaimed Niruu gazing at the village entrance. Commoners had gathered, holding strips of silk²¹ and highland barley liquor.

"Dear Lord, you have come! We are so happy you have come to visit us!" declared Niimanzin, the head of the Darima Clan, as he bowed and offered a strip of white silk in raised hands to Monk Nangsuu who remained on his mule. Another man held a square wooden tray that held three small, white pottery bowls. A separate tray held a jar of liquor. They offered the three bowls of liquor to Monk Nangsuu, who sipped each ceremoniously. Then, dismounting with assistance and supported by Niimanzin and another clan representative, Monk Nangsuu walked down a narrow lane. Clan commoners knelt along the sides of the lane as he passed.

A short time later, they reached the front gate of a household. A big, brand-new wooden square table had been placed near the gate. Two loaves of baked bread topped with a pat of butter had been placed on a nearby small, round, wooden stand. A bowl of milk and a juniper twig were next to the bread.

As was the custom, Monk Nangsuu walked to the table, dipped the juniper twig into the milk, and flung milk into the air three times while calling for auspiciousness and security for his subjects.

Monk Nangsuu was then escorted through the gate, followed by Rnqan and Niruu who took gifts out of a woolen bag.²² Monk

²¹ *Kadog* 'strips of silk (white, blue, orange, or yellow) offered as tokens of respect'.

²² *Daleen* 'a long narrow woolen bag, often slung over a person's shoulder or

Nangsuu presented two porcelain jars of liquor to Niimanzin. To Niimanzin's wife, he gave some dark-blue, folded, coarse cotton cloth. It was enough to sew a garment and robe for each of them. A fist-sized brown sugar crystal was given to Niimanzin's wife as a special gift.

Monk Nangsuu was seated on a white felt-covered seat in the guest room. Two additional pieces of white felt were folded and put behind him so he could sit even more comfortably. Niruu and Rnqan sat on either side of him.

The square table was moved in front of Monk Nangsuu for food and drink.

"Who painted this wonderful table? How lovely!" Monk Nangsuu exclaimed, commenting on patterns on the table's surface one by one.

"A talented painter from my clan," Niimanzin said proudly, and then called the man to come and meet Monk Nangsuu.

A tall, strong man entered. He wore a white felt hat, and a coarse woolen garment tied with a sash. The two ends of his sash were embroidered with colorful patterns of birds' heads, coins, and peonies.

"This is Warimasirang, the painter! He is not only an excellent painter, farmer, and speaker but also a good organizer and warrior in our clan!" extolled Niimanzin.

"What a great Mongghul man! Your clan has a great representative!" agreed Monk Nangsuu looking admiringly at Warimasirang, who was standing near the door.

"You see! In the center of the table is the traditional Chinese character for longevity. Four Tibetan Buddhist patterns are painted around this character. There are also four peonies and five bats.²³ In

across the back of a beast of burden'. Some A mdo Tibetans say *ta len*. A mdo refers to certain northern and central Tibetan areas (portions of the present Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces). It is also denotes a major Tibetan dialect (Limusishiden and Stuart 1998:44).

²³ *Sruusibiiliduu* 'bats' signify longevity.

each corner of the interior rectangle is *jangirog qijiu*²⁴..." Monk Nangsuu continued to examine and comment on the patterns one by one.

Others in the room murmured to each other. Monk Nangsuu was knowledgeable about Mongghul culture. However, as Monk Nangsuu was commenting on the patterns, Warimasirang turned impatiently wanting to leave the room and eventually did so despite Niimanzin's best efforts to persuade him to stay.

The banquet started. *Halighii*,²⁵ steamed twisted rolls, baked bread, potato-stuffed steamed dumplings, deep-fried twisted dough sticks, mutton dishes, pork, roasted highland barley flour, butter, and milk tea were offered on the table.

Darima Clan elders came to the guest room. "First, on behalf of all clan members, I welcome you, our Lord! Everything is fine in our clan and all is going well under your Lord's kind care and protection. What a pity that last year the crops were hit by a hailstorm before harvest. At the same time, an old man died and another got very sick. That's why we didn't come to your mansion to pay the land tax. Please, Lord, forgive us. Please eat well and drink well..." Niimanzin reported, kneeling on the edge of the *yikang*, and offering liquor to Monk Nangsuu.

Niruu and Rnqan glanced at each other, anticipating Monk Nangsuu's reply.

Monk Nangsuu seemed about to speak but in the end, didn't. Instead, he extended his right arm, picked up a liquor cup and, one by one, drank all three. "OK, let's eat together please," he finally exclaimed.

The sounds of eating, drinking, and singing mixed inside the guest room and the courtyard where commoners were enjoying their lives by drinking and eating too.

Niudurigu ne sain durishdi, On today's nice day,

²⁴ *Jangirog qijiu*: showy bleeding heart. It symbolizes beauty.

²⁵ *Halighii* 'food made from tawny day lily'.

Saihan rgu shdanchiliwa,	It is propitious for good things to come,
Ayili kuxin quanlaja,	All clan members have come together,
Jinqan dideya rjela rja,	Our dear Lord has come to visit us,
Budahgiye baisidawaya.	We are all very happy.

A long, melodious circle dance²⁶ song rose from the courtyard. Three men led the dance team by first circling the small garden plot at the center of the courtyard, while dozens of women sang and danced behind them.

Meanwhile, Monk Nangsuu was getting drunk, having been respectfully offered one drink after another by his commoners. He enjoyed himself with these people along with the best food, good liquor, melodious songs, and exuberant dancing.

Niimanzin went out and urged Warimasirang to offer liquor to Monk Nangsuu. He reluctantly complied.

"Oh, it's you, my warrior painter! You are the last one to offer me liquor!" Monk Nangsuu exclaimed gazing up at Warimasirang.

Warimasirang remained silent, offering the liquor cups on the round wooden tray. As he stared back at Monk Nangsuu, his face flushed and his eyes flashed.

"OK! I would like to invite you to come and visit my mansion this fall when your clan comes with your land tax," announced Monk Nangsuu as he sat facing Niimanzin, who was also sitting on the platform, and as he extended his arm to take a liquor cup from Warimasirang.

"No, I don't want to visit your mansion!" Warimasirang replied firmly.

Everyone in the room went slack-jawed with shock.

²⁶ *Anzhog* is a circle dance, common in Mongghul areas, that is held at a home around the small courtyard plot or in front of the household gate. It is also performed in lanes and on threshing grounds in winter during the New Year period. Generally, one or two men lead the singing and dancing, followed by mostly women. The dancers bend over while their arms swing left and right twice, then turn while their arms are stretched in the air.

"We cannot pay your land tax! In the past hundred years of one Tughuan Nangsuu after another, we have offered huge amounts of grain. What have we received in return apart from farm-



land? From now on, we want no relationship with you. We don't need you Nangsuu!" Warimasirang bellowed.

The pottery liquor cup fell from Monk Nangsuu's hand, struck the beautiful, patterned square table, and shattered.

At this critical juncture, a shout came from the courtyard that a clan home had caught fire.

Turning, Warimasirang left in a rush, followed by others, leaving only Niimanzin and two other elders with the guests.

"Let's go home!" Monk Nangsuu sputtered.

Niruu and Rnqan helped Monk Nangsuu down from the sitting platform to the floor and together walked to the courtyard. Niimanzin and the others beseeched him to stay overnight, but he refused.

Before Monk Nangsuu left, he told Niimanzin that if he wished to end his relationship with Tughuan Nangsuu, then he should return the land their clan farmed.

In the darkness, Monk Nangsuu and his two servants mounted their mules and in low spirits quickly headed in the direction of their home. As they rode out of the village, they saw huge flames rising to the sky from a corner of the village accompanied by loud screams and the crash of breaking wood.

2

CURSING MONK NANGSUU

Eventually, the clan members extinguished the fire. Later, under Niimanzin's direction, clan members assisted the stricken family with timber and labor to rebuild, grain for food, and straw for fuel.

This unexpected incident had distracted everyone, otherwise, the clan most probably would have beaten Warimasirang for insulting Monk Nangsuu. They were sure Monk Nangsuu would take revenge.

Niimanzin, Warimasirang, and several other elders went to the village temple where they consulted their clan deity, Niidosang.²⁷

Warimasirang made a big incense offering²⁸ in the small garden inside the temple. As the smoke rose, all participants piously prostrated three times to the spear representing Niidosang. An experienced male elder asked Niidosang questions while another elder held the spear: "Why was there such a terrible fire? Did the family offend a *purghan*?"

The spear in the other elder's hands stayed still, expressing a negative answer.

"Is it related to the family's graveyard?" the interrogator gently continued.

Again, the spear was still.

"Did some evil cause the disaster?" the interrogator resumed.

²⁷ Niidosang refers to a particular spear *purghan* generally regarded as a protector in Mongghul areas. It also refers to a Mongol general. Niidosang is the only *purghan* devoutly believed in by nearly all Mongghul (Limusishiden et al. 2013:128).

²⁸ Incense offerings are often made by burning juniper branches and roasted highland barley flour for deities who, it is believed, consume the odor of burnt offerings.

All others present prostrated to the spear hoping for a quick, correct answer.

Suddenly, the spear moved rapidly up and down in the holder's hands, signaling a positive response.

"Which direction did the murderous evil come from? Was it from the southeast?" the interrogator continued.

Monk Nangsuu's mansion was southeast of the Darima Clan.

Again, the spear moved up and down wildly, an unequivocal "Yes!"

"Monk Nangsuu and his people came to visit that day. Do you mean that he and his men brought the evil that caused the fire?" the interrogator asked.

The spear madly moved up and down, leaving no doubt as to the cause of the devastating fire.

"Thank you! We are delighted that you have shown us the cause. What can we do? Should we deal with it by burying something?" Niimanzin asked.

The spear moved up and down.

"Where should it be buried? On the mountaintop behind our village?" Niimanzin asked knowingly.

The spear again moved up and down, signifying agreement.

"Should our village hold this rite today?" asked Niimanzin.

The spear was still.

"Tomorrow?"

The spear moved up and down.

"Tomorrow night?"

Again, the spear moved up and down.

"What exact time tomorrow night? After supper?" enquired the skillful deity interrogator in the village.

Once again, the spear moved up and down.

"Shall we bury an arrow?" asked the interrogator.

The spear moved up and down.

"Now everything is clear. Thank you," concluded the interrogator.

"But please wait! I have one more question," Warimasirang exclaimed and, approaching the spear asked, "I offended Monk Nangsuu the day the fire broke out. Our clan would like to sever our connection with him. Is that OK?"

The spear moved up and down enthusiastically, again signaling agreement.

"Will Monk Nangsuu take our farmland from us if we disobey his command?" Niimanzin asked cautiously.

The spear was still.

"You mean he cannot take away our fields?" Niimanzin confirmed.

The spear very definitely moved up and down.

"Is there anything else we should know?" enquired Niimanzin.

The spear was still.

"You mean you now have nothing more to tell us, right?" concluded Niimanzin.

The Niidosang spear moved up and down.

They piously prostrated to their Niidosang spear and then placed it back in the temple.

"We should have disobeyed Monk Nangsuu. There are many fearful evils in Fulaan Nara. Haliqi residents denigrate those from Fulaan Nara and avoid them. Intermarriage is rare. Once before, when people from Nangsuu Mansion came to visit our village, a quiet young man died suddenly and mysteriously. We already had this lesson. We must end our relationship with our Nangsuu," Warimasirang declared confidently.

The clan agreed to stop the relationship that had been practiced for centuries and began preparing for the rite to be held the following night.

The next evening, almost all the village men gathered on the top of the mountain behind their village. A red lama²⁹ from their clan

²⁹ A *hguandii* 'red lama' is capable of both good and evil. He can summon and command evil, and can send illness or misfortune to a certain person or a particular community.

was invited to participate. The spear-holder held the deity spear. When darkness came, a huge incense offering was made. Niimanzin and Warimasirang asked Niidosang for guidance on how to bury the arrow. Under Niidosang's supervision, they dug a pit in which they placed an arrowhead, ensuring it pointed southeast at Nangsuu Mansion in Fulaan Nara valley. After that, they quickly filled the pit with soil.

During this time, the red lama sat by the pit, ringing his bells, rattling his drum, and brandishing his dagger while chanting curses.

"Now, has the rite finished?" the interrogator asked, once the pit was filled.

The spear moved up and down.

"From now on, everything is secure in our village, right? We needn't worry about more trouble from Monk Nangsuu, right?" clarified Niimanzin.

The spear energetically moved up and down.

Now that the cursing ritual was completed, the participants slowly walked down the slopes of the mountain into the dark night, feeling pleased and more secure.

3

MONK NANGSUU'S REVENGE

With a forceful click-click, the wooden ceiling crashed down. Monk Nangsuu woke from his dream with a start. Sitting up, he opened his eyes to see what had happened and shouted for Niruu and Rnqan, who slept in an adjoining room. They rushed in and lit a twisted wick from an ember. A large hole yawned in the middle of the ceiling from which some pieces of wood dangled.

"Dreadful! This couldn't happen. How strange!" Niruu exclaimed in surprise as he examined the damaged ceiling by the light of the twisted wick lamp.

Staring in panic at this unbelievable scene, Monk Nangsuu said, "I was dreaming when the ceiling suddenly collapsed. In my dream, I saw many people busily harvesting in our fields behind the mansion walls. They were laughing and talking."

"Seeing a happy person or a happy scene in a dream is a bad omen. Those are evil signs. We must consult our deity," Rnqan suggested irritably.

Monk Nangsuu agreed.

Zanan, Hgunqog, and Mamadii, Nangsuu's nephews, were summoned. Zanan was the eldest brother, followed in age by Hgunqog and Mamadii.

After passing through two corridors, they entered the courtyard reserved for their deities. Three deity rooms were built on a high soil platform in the courtyard's northeast corner. Nangsuu's mules and horses were kept in a stable at the base of the soil platform.

Walking up seven more flights of stairs, they turned right and reached the door of the deity rooms. They unlocked the door and entered. A lit butter lamp sat on a chest in front of two deities:

Xuanglang Liuya Deity and Gunbuquxjang Deity. The latter deity was represented in a painting that hung on the back wall of the room and was never asked questions. Instead, it was simply worshipped.

Four men carried Xuanglang Liuya Deity on their shoulders and walked down the stairs to the courtyard where there was enough space for Xuanglang Liuya Deity to move back and forth.

In the darkness, the four people carrying the Xuanglang Liuya Deity sedan waited for questions.

"Lady Sovereign, please tell us why the wooden ceiling collapsed in Monk Nangsuu's room? Are there misfortunes that we should know about? If so, what precautions should we take?" Zanan asked piously and quietly, bending over slightly, his hands clasped together in front of his lower abdomen.

Xuanglang Liuya Deity walked forward immediately, signifying the affirmative.

"Is it related to crops? Will hailstones strike the crops at the end of harvest time?" Zanan continued.

Xuanglang Liuya Deity walked backward signifying the negative.

After more than two hours of difficult questioning, they learned that Darima subjects had cursed them by burying an arrow which was now harming them. Serious misfortunes would befall Nangsuu Mansion if they did not respond by burying an ox head and chanting curses.

On the fourth night after consulting Xuanglang Liuya Deity, Monk Nangsuu and his retinue started off to the mountain behind the Darima Clan village. Autumn breezes murmured in the crops along the sides of the path. Walking in the spacious valley in the pitch-black night, they felt cold. Mounted on his mule, Monk Nangsuu led the group, followed by men carrying Xuanglang Liuya Deity on their shoulders. In turn, they were followed by two red lamas, some men and boys.

They dismounted after reaching the mountaintop at the place Xuanglang Liuya Deity had identified as the burial site. A stake was

driven into the ground. The two red lamas sat with their legs crossed, facing the stake, and began chanting curses while wielding knives and swords, shaking hand-drums, and jangling bells. They were extremely solemn as they carried out these important tasks. Deep in meditation, they concentrated their gaze on the stake the whole time. A deep hole was dug into which they placed an ox head, ensuring it pointed northwest at the mountaintop where the Darima Clan had buried the arrow. Grains, sugar, pieces of cloth, and sheep's wool were put around the ox head.

At this point, the two red lamas began blowing trumpets made from human femurs. A big fire was lit and the hole was quickly filled. The stake was thrust into the fire. During this time the entire assembly howled and cursed the Darima Clan. A long rifle was fired and the trumpets were sounded again as Xuanglang Liuya Deity madly circled the stake and the hole.

When all was finished, everyone returned to Tughuan Village.

The loud gunshots and blaring trumpets woke Niimanzin. Opening the window above the front gate corridor, he saw a frightening circular glow rolling toward his village. It seemed that a woman mounted on a horse was in this glow. Niimanzin was stunned. He was sure the rifle sound must have come from Nangsuu. Only a rifle could have made such a sound in the Seven Valleys and the glowing image he had seen must have been Xuanglang Liuya Deity. All of Tughuan Nangsuu's subjects knew that his deity was powerful and violent.

"All my clan will suffer," Niimanzin lamented, and with a heavy sigh, he slammed the window shut.

Indeed, in the following years, Darima Clan members became progressively weaker and poorer. The clan population didn't increase and crops were annually destroyed by drought or hail.

Monk Nangsuu repeatedly tried his best to take away farmland from the subjects who had betrayed him, but he was not successful. However, he did take Warimasirang, the key offender of the Darima Clan, to the Chinese court in Weiyuan Town. The judge


was bribed with silver and Warimasirang was jailed. Before he was sent to jail, he told Niimanzin and his other clan members, "Don't return Monk Nangsuu's land as long as I'm alive!"

Afterward, the relationship between Nangsuu and Darima Clan was completely severed. Xuanglang Liuya Deity didn't allow her Tughuan villagers to attend the annual Darima Love Song Meeting in summer when residents of the Seven Valleys came to display their beautiful clothes and embroidery and importantly, to meet their lovers.



4

NANGSUU MANSION

t was the twelfth lunar month. Abundant snow covered every mountain and field. A flock of sparrows flew down, landing on a huge pile of wheat straw leaning against the east wall inside Nangsuu Mansion. The straw was used for cooking fuel and feeding livestock during the long winter. The sparrows briskly hopped about in the straw, busily scratching and pecking, looking for food here and there.

Several children inside the Mansion saw the sparrows and, quickly grabbing a bamboo sieve, approached the straw stack. The sparrows fluttered off. The children swept around the straw, sprinkled some wheat seeds here and there, and then propped up the sieve over the spot with a short stick tied to a long, thin rope. The other end of the rope went through a window into a room where the children sat, watching as the sparrows flitted back again. They waited and waited until some slowly hopped near the sieve and then suddenly, stopped. The clever sparrows didn't at first go under the sieve, but stretched their necks, pecking at the seeds they could reach.

Suddenly, the rope jerked. The children ran over and found they had caught three sparrows. After carefully removing the sparrows, they wrung their necks, plucked them, removed their guts, and grilled them over a fire. They then shared the sparrow meat, enjoying it piece by little piece.

After lunch, as Layinsuu and other women were sweeping away the snow in the courtyard, there was a knock on the front gate. Layinsuu opened the gate and found a tall, young man standing there. Three young men were behind him, tending ten horses loaded with woolen bags. One horse carried two sheep carcasses. The out-of-breath horses snorted, shooting white plumes of air from

wheezing nostrils into the frigid winter air.

The young man standing in front of Layinsuu made a handsome impression immediately. He wore a reddish-yellow foxskin hat; two long silver earrings hung from his ears. Attached to the back of the hat were two blue cloth strips that fell down his back on either side of his hair which was braided into a long pigtail that swung from side to side as he walked. His whitish lambskin robe was tied with an embroidered sash. His cloth leggings reached up to his knees. The legs of his baggy cloth trousers were stuffed into his boots. A decorated sheath hung from the right side of his waist. An embroidered tobacco bag was lodged in the sash in front of his chest and a rectangular embroidered pocket was sewn on the upper right of his undershirt.

Layinsuu realized that these subjects of Nangsuu Mansion had come to pay the land tax.

"Uncle! Come in! Where are you from?" Layinsuu asked as she stepped aside to make room for them to enter.

"Aagu!³⁰ We are from Luxuu.³¹ We have brought grain to Nangsuu Mansion," the youth said gently smiling, his teeth gleaming brightly.

A long wide passageway inside the front gate led into the distance and finally to the west wall of the Mansion. Courtyards had been constructed on both sides of the passageway. The visitors were asked to walk to the northwest corner. Mansion workers came to help unload the bags and the horses were then watered and led into stables.

The two sheep carcasses, two big jars of liquor, a deep-yellow strip of silk, and two loaves of baked bread were gifts to Monk Nangsuu.

The highland barley and wheat grain were weighed bag by bag, one bag after another on a big beam scale and then poured into the granary. A Chinese man recorded the subjects' names and the

³⁰ *Aagu* 'young woman', a term of address for young women.

³¹ Today's Lushuo Village, Donggou Township.

quantity of grain, using an ink brush on paper.

With a smile, Layinsuu told the young man that Monk Nangsuu was coming.

Monk Nangsuu soon arrived from his courtyard to meet his subjects. He wore an expensive, dark-red woolen robe³² and woolen boots with tall uppers tied tightly with a string. He also wore a round hat decorated with silver-white patterns. From the hat's low brim were four ear covers to be used on cold days. Nangsuu was a big-boned, tall man with prickly stubble on his face. His hair was braided into a pigtail lengthened with green strings that ended in tassels. The pigtail swayed back and forth across his back as he walked. His eagle-like eyes and thick prickly beard suggested he was formidable.

The young man quickly went to greet Nangsuu and held his hands warmly. "I'm Lasizisirang, from Luxuu!" he announced, introducing himself.

"This must be your first time to my Mansion, right? How is your father?" Monk Nangsuu asked.

Lasizisirang's father was Limusirang, the head of one of Monk Nangsuu's most loyal clans. Each year Limusirang personally visited Nangsuu to pay the land tax. He was also a weaver. Monk Nangsuu was very fond of Limusirang and when they were together, they had a lot to chat about.

"My father is good, though he complains he is getting old. He wants me to come to visit you more often in the future. Coming to see you is as pleasant as visiting my maternal uncle's home!³³ Your mansion is majestic! I have never seen such magnificent walls before!" Lasizisirang gushed.

"You are too polite, young man! I'm pleased to see you, too! I will introduce Nangsuu Mansion to you in detail," Monk Nangsuu

³² *Chuula* are warm and durable and were also used as raincoats.

³³ Mongghul children were happy and excited to visit their maternal uncles' homes. Children felt free during these visits and were given treats such as delicious food and gifts.

replied, enjoying this well-spoken, and very handsome young man.

Holding the fingers of Lasizisirang's right hand, he walked him into the kitchen room where he and his entourage were then entertained on the *pei* at the center of which a fire briskly burned in a brazier fueled by sheep dung. Monk Nangsuu sat at the most important place, Lasizisirang sat next to him, and the others were seated around the fire. Extending their arms, they warmed their cold hands over the fire while eating, drinking, joking, and puffing strong local tobacco in their long pipes.

Monk Nangsuu told them the names of all the previous Nangsuu and their stories, including the relationship between Nangsuu and Rgulang Monastery;³⁴ as well as Tughuan Living Buddha and Tughuan Village. In return, Lasizisirang and his fellows told stories of their village and surroundings, including how the crops had been that year; how many weddings had been held, or were planned in their village; who had died and why, and their funeral rituals; and details of conflicts between couples and neighbors.

Munu aama qi nige sunisi,	Mother, please listen,
Bu halidan guaisan uldingi	I want a sword inlaid with gold,
hgilegunii,	
Malang buda ghuila uldi awula	Tomorrow, we will go buy a sword,
yog,	
Uldingi guisa yangiji qirig	How can I go to battle with no sword?
durigui?	

These mournful, old, long melodious drinking songs rang out in the kitchen of Nangsuu's Mansion deep into the quiet night. Layinsuu felt the night had become happier as she boiled milk tea, warmed liquor, and kept the *pei* warm by adding straw to the kitchen oven. She was deeply moved by Lasizisirang's song. This was the first time a handsome man who was also humorous and eloquent was among the

³⁴ Rgulang Monastery a Dge lug institution, was located in Sitan Village, Wushi Town. There were 396 monks in 1957 (Pu 2013:71-75).

numerous visitors to Nangsuu Mansion.

The next morning, when golden-yellow sunlight illuminated the mountain peak behind Tughuan Village, Monk Nangsuu and Lasizisirang went atop the Mansion wall, the fierce morning cold forcing them to put their hands inside the sleeves of their long robes.

"Your Mansion is so large and majestic! Particularly the high walls! It's really amazing!" Lasizisirang exclaimed, carefully looking around.

"How true! My ancestors said the Mansion wall was built over several years," Monk Nangsuu responded, his right hand scratching the stubble on his face.

"When was it built?" Lasizisirang asked, as he slowly walked along the walkway.

"We aren't sure of the exact year. According to the ancestors it was built in the Yongle Period,³⁵ which means it has lasted about five centuries."

"Please tell me more," Lasizisirang urged.

"Sure! It is square in shape and the walls are made from packed, fine soil. The height of the wall is about nine meters.³⁶ The width at the top is two meters. The base walls are four meters thick. The perimeter of the Mansion is about 350 meters. There isn't another mansion this size in Wuxi Valley," Monk Nangsuu said, his hand pointing at the vast, long valley.

"Uncle Nangsuu, why was a room built in each of the four corners on top of the walls? What are the holes for along the low adobe walls on both sides of the walkway at the top of the wall?" Lasizisirang enquired further as the two strolled near a room at one corner.

"The four corner rooms were used by guards, to rest and sleep when they got tired from patrolling in the evening and at night. The holes at intervals along the low adobe walls are crenels to shoot arrows and guns from during enemy attack. The walkway is wide

³⁵ Yongle Period (1403-1424).

³⁶ One meter = three *chi* or 3.3 *zhang*.

enough to allow two men to walk shoulder to shoulder," Monk Nangsuu continued, gesturing at these various features.

Monk Nangsuu continued walking with Lasizisirang in rapt attendance when he suddenly recalled, "The Mansion's walls were built with great effort. All the soil was sifted to remove the fine soil. How the soil packs together determine a wall's structural strength and permeability.³⁷ In addition, while building the walls, an eighteen-year-old girl knelt and threw 108 shovelfuls, one by one, of fine soil over the top of the wall without a pause. This beautiful story has been handed down to us. Married women are not allowed to walk on the walkway, but young girls are."

Lasizisirang listened in fascination.

They continued walking around the Mansion wall exchanging more stories before descending a wooden ladder into the courtyard where they passed through the front gate that had been built in the middle of the south wall.

"What a splendid front gate! This is the first time I have seen such a big, nicely carved, and decorated gate," Lasizisirang enthused, pointing to the decorative patterns on the upper part of the gate with his right index finger.

"Yes indeed! Let me describe the front gate to you in detail. The paving stones around the front gate as well as in the doorway were taken from the banks of the Wuxi River. The door has two pinewood boards each about fourteen centimeters thick. That's thick enough to defend against an enemy invasion. The gate's roof is made from white sandalwood and the frame from red sandalwood. Cypress is used for the threshold. Decorations were carved into the upper part of the gate. The patterns on the top, fourth, and sixth levels are the Tibetan Buddhist treasure vase symbolizing a long life, wealth and prosperity, and all the benefits of this world including liberation; in

³⁷ The saying, *Mongghuldi seer yiiha rmaana naan, Qidarishdi seer yiiha ger puzighan* 'Mongghul paint courtyard walls if they have money, Han build houses if they have money' suggests that Mongghul emphasize their courtyard walls' appearance and strength.

the middle of the second level is the traditional Chinese character for longevity; the peach blossoms carved into the two sides symbolize longevity in the family; on the third level is the auspicious Tibetan Buddhist drawing symbolizing the complete union of wisdom and great compassion; and on the fifth level are clouds symbolizing Great Heaven while on the seventh are peonies, our traditional floral symbol symbolizing high position and great wealth," explained Monk Nangsuu.

Lasizisirang looked at the long, wide passageway in the distance that ran through to the west wall of the Mansion. There were courtyards on each side of the passageway. On the west side, there were three, each with its own front gate facing into the passageway. On the east side, there were two courtyards constructed at two corners of the Mansion. One was in the northeastern corner and the other was in the southeastern corner. The front doors of both courtyards also faced into the passageway. Between the two courtyards was a dirt platform where numerous white stones were piled. It was Nangsuu's *rdunbin*.³⁸

"There are many courtyards and rooms in your mansion. Which one is your living area?" probed Lasizisirang.

"The first courtyard on the left side of the passageway by the front gate, from south to north is my living area. My own family and my mother live here," Monk Nangsuu said, pointing to his courtyard.

"What is the second courtyard used for?" Lasizisirang enquired.

"It is for the jail and kitchen room. The three rooms on the west side are jail cells and on the eastern side are the kitchen rooms. The rooms on the north side are for the trial judge and criminals. The

³⁸ *Rdunbin* 'small mound'. First, a hole was dug, and then metal weapons, such as arrows, helmets, knives, daggers, and plow shares were buried. Many small, light-colored stones were placed atop the mound. The buried weapons and stones on top protected a household, a clan, and the village from evil and ghosts. A *rdunbin* was also used to take revenge. *Rdunbin* were built in various places, for example, by a household or inside a household, near a path or riverbank. The location was chosen by a deity.

rooms on the south side are the servants' rooms," detailed Monk Nangsuu and walked in a northerly direction, wanting to introduce the third yard.

"This is a shrine room. The three rooms on the west side are for monks from Rgulang Monastery who come regularly during the year to chant Buddhist scriptures and stay the night. The three shrine rooms were built on a huge soil platform at the northeast of the courtyard. A stable was built at the base of the soil platform," Monk Nangsuu said, finishing his explanation about the west side of the Mansion.

The two turned right, and the courtyard at the northeast corner of the passageway soon came into view. Monk Nangsuu explained that this was where the storerooms were.

"Ah! And what are the two earth mounds?" Lasizisirang enquired, pointing to the foot of the north wall between the walls of the two yards.

"Oh, sorry! I forgot to mention this. They are tomb mounds. In addition to being skilled workers, these two men were good managers responsible for the Mansion's construction. To honor them, they were buried here inside the Mansion so that their descendants could easily commemorate them by burning juniper and roasted highland barley mixed with rapeseed oil,"³⁹ Monk Nangsuu declared emotionally.

"That's the way it should be because they built this Mansion for your family," agreed Lasizisirang, looking at the two graves.

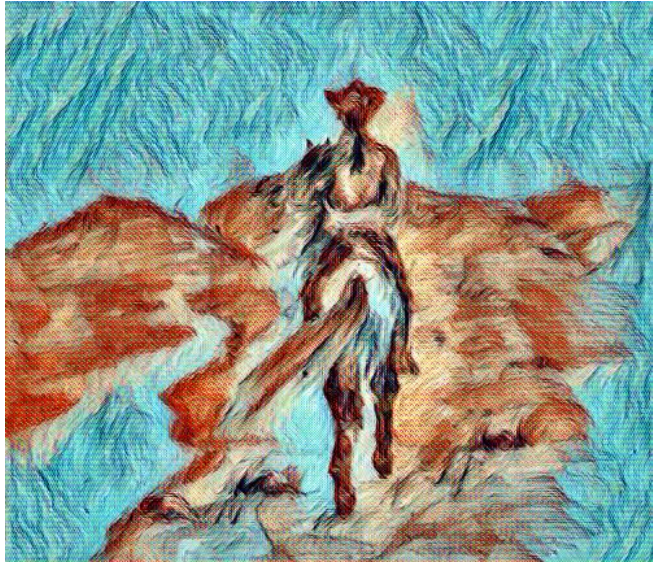
They walked in a southern direction towards Nangsuu's family *rdunbin*.

Next to this platform in the southeast corner of the mansion was another courtyard and, to the right of the front gate, was Monk Nangsuu's nephews' area.

By the time Monk Nangsuu had finished his introductions, Layinsuu had already cooked breakfast and was waiting for them in front of the kitchen yard gate.

³⁹ *Szuari* 'roasted highland barley flour mixed with rapeseed oil'.

After a breakfast of milk tea, roasted highland barley flour, and bread, Lasizisirang and his retinue left the Mansion. Monk Nangsuu, Layinsuu, and others saw them off at the front gate. As Lasizisirang mounted his horse, Layinsuu walked near him, smiled, and said goodbye.




Lasizisirang stared at Layinsuu again, eyeing her up and down. She was short, with expressive eyes in a round, pretty face. Her hair was in a small bun atop her head, bound with a red cord. The remainder of her hair was braided into plaits, bound together at the neck with red cords, and covered with a short sheath decorated with shells. Her hair was as black as ebony, a sign of excellent hair and her hands were inside her wide sleeves. Although urging his horse forward Lasizisirang's eyes were fixed on Layinsuu; he was obviously reluctant to leave.

Layinsuu continued watching Lasizisirang as he receded into the distance. Similarly, Lasizisirang's mind was occupied with images of Layinsuu's sweet face. A bridge had already been erected between the two. Perhaps, it was a smooth road where the two would walk closer, or perhaps it would bring suffering.

5

LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

t was the first day of the Lunar New Year. All Tughuan villagers were happily enjoying the festivities, visiting the homes of clan members in Tughuan Village, bringing gifts of bread. In almost every household people were eating newly fried bread, noodles, and pork, and drinking locally made liquor.

According to custom, all New Year visits had to finish before the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. After that, it was considered impolite to visit. Mongghul did not visit relatives in other villages or travel long distances. They visited only clan members in their village on the first day of the first lunar New Year. On the second and third days, they visited the wife's parents' home or the husband's maternal uncles' homes. On the fourth day, they began to visit their father's sisters' and mother's sisters' homes.

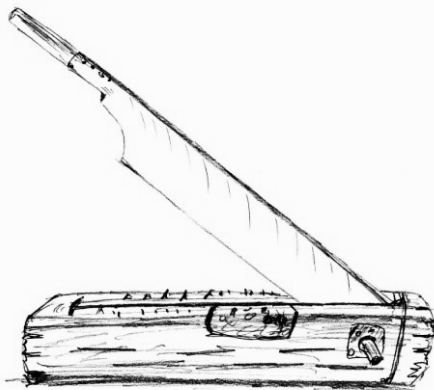
The first day of the first lunar month was a very busy time at Monk Nangsuu's Mansion. Two or three members⁴⁰ from each village household came in the early morning to extend New Year's greetings to Nangsuu. All visitors were entertained in his personal courtyard. When a family came, they first offered bread on a wooden tray, which they left on a chest in the main hall. Then they went to the side room where Monk Nangsuu and his wife, both clad in new clothes, were waiting to receive visitors.

This year, Zhaxi, the nephew of one of Monk Nangsuu's cousins came, along with his three children. They were also wearing new clothes. After first putting a wooden tray with bread on the chest in the main hall, they turned to face the small door of Monk Nangsuu's sitting room and greeted, "Happy New Year, dear Uncle

⁴⁰ A family's father and his children came to extend New Year greetings while the wife stayed at home to entertain visitors.

Nangsuu and Aunt Nangsuu!"

"Zhaxi, Happy New Year to you all, too!" Uncle and Aunt Nangsuu warmly responded. Monk Nangsuu wore a white felt hat and a wine-colored walnut-patterned long satin robe. Liuyansuu wore a new blue, walnut-patterned satin robe. On top of her long robe was a short Chinese-style, sleeveless cotton garment. Attached to the right of her waist belt was a piece of black cotton cloth that she periodically used to wipe her face. She also wore a new Tughuan headdress. The three pronged-pasteboard forks of her headdress stood tall and upright above her head. Her two silver earrings were large and heavy. They featured a soldered plate with a flower design, from which hung silver pins. To prevent the heavy earrings from tearing her ears, they were attached to a ribbon that went around her head. The earrings were further attached to each other by a chain encrusted with corals and pearls that ran under her chin.



Zhaxi entered the room and filled Uncle and Aunt's tea bowls with tea brought from his home in an earthenware teapot. Then he returned to the main hall and stood in a line with his three children facing the back wall. While prostrating three times, Zhaxi and his children called out, "Here we are! Happy New Year greetings to Uncle Nangsuu⁴¹ and Aunt Nangsuu! Here we are! Happy New Year greetings to all elders inside the Mansion!"

"Fine! Fine! Please prostrate to Great Heaven, all deities, and the emperor!" Monk Nangsuu and Liuyansuu called loudly from the

⁴¹ His three children said, "Grandfather Nangsuu" and "Grandmother Nangsuu."

room.

Zhaxi himself was invited to sit on the *pei* while his three children sat on the edge of the same platform. Understanding that the children wanted New Year gifts much more than tea and bread, Liuyansuu took out some brown crystal sugar and gave some to each of the three children. Once they had received this, they immediately and happily left the room to play with the other children in the passageway. All the Tughuan village children knew that only the children who visited Grandfather Nangsuu's Mansion received sugar during their New Year visit. This is why all the children were happy to visit the Mansion on the first day of the Lunar New Year.

Monk Nangsuu drank liquor with the village elders while sitting around a bronze brazier atop a wooden table. They ate, drank, played finger games,⁴² and merrily sang drinking songs until most of them were drunk. A charcoal fire supplied heat to the room. A teapot hung from a long iron chain fastened to the ceiling above the charcoal fire.

Several boys were playing "the eagle catches the chicken" in the passageway. In this game, one boy carries a second boy on his back. The second boy holds tightly to the first boy's neck. At the same time, the second boy's legs are held by a third boy with about ten boys standing in a line behind him. One boy, pretending to be an eagle, stands at the front of the line and tries to catch a chicken (one of the boys) in the line. The first chicken tries to block the eagle while others move from side to side like a snake, to prevent the eagle from walking near one of them. On this extremely cold winter day, some wore white felt hats while a few wore black lambskin hats. All wore coarse white woolen robes and colorful shoes.⁴³ They laughed, made faces,

⁴² A drinking game in which two players point fingers at each other and shout a number. Each combination of fingers has a numerical value. Losers drink as punishment.

⁴³ The uppers of *alog qanhai* have two layers and the pattern of the vamps is clouds. A narrow strip of sheep leather is sewn on either side of the center top part of the front of the shoes. Sheep leather, which is tough and durable, is used for decorative purposes.

and moved their bodies from side to side.

Several girls were playing with a ball made of sheep yarn. They either threw or kicked the ball to each other.

Elsewhere, other children chased each other on the walkway atop the Mansion wall, shouting and laughing as they passed through the four corner rooms. Two boys held sticks representing guns as they solemnly marched on the walkway like soldiers. Every now and then, they crouched down by the crenels and shot with their "gun." This was a rare chance to play on the walkway at Nangsuu Mansion.

Suddenly, all the children rushed from the passageway to the doorway. Layinsuu felt irritated by the children's unusual behavior and wondered if something special was taking place. Then she saw a middle-aged woman and a girl of thirteen or fourteen surrounded by the curious children.

As Layinsuu approached, the children moved aside. The woman's face had been beaten black and blue and was swollen. She wore a large worn-out headdress⁴⁴ shaped like a small winnowing basket. There were tassels of red thread on the front, and red thread fringes on the sides. In the middle of the front of the headdress were pieces of glass and one row of coral and shell pieces. On her back was a cushion held by ribbons that went around her head. Her long robe had a double set of sleeves.

The young girl wore an old, long robe and a sleeveless short garment over it. The edge of her garment was decorated with red cloth. On her back was a braid tied with three white round shells for decoration, while the end was tied with a red cloth.

Looking at their helpless eyes and haggard faces, Layinsuu realized they were suffering.

"Where are you from Aunt? What can we do for you?" Layinsuu asked.

"We are from Rangdin Village in Haliqi. We have come begging for food," the woman answered awkwardly.

Layinsuu ordered the gawking children to leave. They quickly

⁴⁴ *Shge niudaari* 'big headdress'.

went inside and resumed playing.

At this moment, a black cloud covered the weak afternoon sun and the sky turned dark. Layinsuu suddenly felt freezing cold. Her limbs were numb. She reached a decision and invited the two to enter the Mansion on this important festival day. This was unorthodox. It is normally taboo to ask strangers to visit during the Lunar New Year, particularly when they come emptied-handed because it is inauspicious.

Layinsuu reported to Liuyansuu, who came into the kitchen where the woman and girl were eating bread and drinking tea. She asked them to sit down while she herself sat on the other side of the fire where horse dung burned at the center of the *pei*. Four pieces of gray felt made from goat wool were on the ground around the smoldering fire.

"What's your name? Is this girl your daughter?" Liuyansuu asked.

"My name is Rnqanhua. Yes, she is my daughter, Jiraqog. We are from Rangdin,⁴⁵ in Haliqi," Rnqanhua replied in a low, timid voice while Jiraqog nervously stared at her mother.

"Why were you and your daughter wandering outside, instead of staying at home happily celebrating the New Year Festival? Did someone beat you?" Liuyansuu asked looking with disbelief at her swollen face.

Rnqanhua nodded, sobbed, and wiping away her tears with her long robe sleeves, started her story:

Dear Aunt, how can I describe my miserable life? My husband is an alcoholic. He is often drunk and when he's drunk, he beats me. He went to a neighbor's home on the afternoon of New Year's Eve to print sacred horses⁴⁶ using a wooden block. He returned home, drunk. When he saw me, he suddenly grabbed a shovel from the courtyard and beat me

⁴⁵ Today's Rangdin Mongghul Village, Donggou Township.

⁴⁶ *Qanma* refers to papers inscribed with sacred horses that are pasted on doors, roofs, and courtyard walls on New Year's Eve.

fiercely. Jiraqog tried to stop him. This further angered him, and so he also beat her. Eventually, he drove us out, cursing us and said we should never return, telling us to go wherever we wanted. I have escaped from him numerous times, but every time I have returned because I have children with him and I should take care of them until they're grown up. But I won't go back again, even though I must beg for food.

Rnqanhua wailed sadly after finishing her tale. Jiraqog looked at Liuyansuu's face, and also began sobbing.

Liuyansuu said nothing for a while. She sat with her head bent, seemingly lost in thoughts of the suffering mother and daughter. Then, standing up, she walked out the kitchen door telling Layinsuu without looking back, "Let them eat well and sleep on the *pei* tonight."

Rising early the next morning, Rnqanhua and Jiraqog cleaned the courtyard and helped Layinsuu cook breakfast by putting wheat straw inside the kitchen stove and poking the straw with a stick until it began burning nicely.


Time passed. The fifteenth day of the first lunar month passed. Half a month had gone by since Rnqanhua and Jiraqog had come to the Mansion. Spring plowing was coming soon. Rnqanhua, Jiraqog, Layinsuu, and several other women began pounding hard chunks of manure with mallets near the Mansion's front gate. Rnqanhua and Jiraqog worked hard, undertaking heavy chores inside the Mansion as well as doing a great deal of farm work on the nearby fields. Their good work together with their kindness prompted Liuyansuu to announce one day to Rnqanhua, "Please replace your big headdress with the Tughuan headdress."⁴⁷

This meant she and Monk Nangsuu had agreed that the mother and daughter could stay forever in Nangsuu Mansion.

⁴⁷ Historically, the Tughuan headdress was a symbol of power and nobility. Only Tughuan Village women had the right to wear it. Women who married and moved into their husband's homes in the village from other areas had to wear it while they were in Tughuan Village.

6

TUGHUAN VILLAGE

arly one cloudless morning, when Wuxi Valley was still very quiet, columns of smoke rose from the chimneys of households, forming a light blue haze above Tughuan Village.

The Wuxi River originated from the Gantan⁴⁸ and Kuilog⁴⁹ gorges in the valley's northeast end, at the foot of the Durizang Mountains.⁵⁰ Further flows came from the south, as well as much water from further subsidiary valleys along the way until it finally flowed out of Wuxi Valley and into the Xranghuali River.⁵¹

In the northern half of Wuxi Valley, the villages were mostly Mongghul, except for two Tibetan villages. In the south, most villages were Chinese.

Tughuan Village was located on the west bank of the Wuxi River in the mid-part of Wushi Valley, at the foot of Tughuan Mountain. Rgulang Monastery was located about an hour's walk from Tughuan Village. Wuxi Village was opposite Tughuan Village, separated by the Wuxi River. Foori Village was above Tughuan and Jangja Village was below.

The Tughuan Mountain cairn⁵² atop Tughuan Mountain behind Tughuan Village served as a border between the Darima and Wuxi areas. Lawaa Mongghul Village was located at the foot of the

⁴⁸ Today's Gantan Tibetan Village, Wushi Town.

⁴⁹ Today's Kuilog Tibetan Village, Wushi Town.

⁵⁰ Durizang refers to a towering, sacred mountain in the north part of Wushi Town.

⁵¹ Today's Huangshui River.

⁵² *Lasizi*, T, *lab tse*. Many *lasizi* have a square stone hollow base rimmed by a low wood railing. Many poles resembling arrows and spears are inserted into the *lasizi*. They are consecrated to Heaven and various deities, particularly mountain deities.

Tughuan Mountain cairn on the west side, within Darima territory. Tughuan Village was located at the foot of the cairn's east side and was within the Wuxi jurisdiction. Numerous wooden spears, knives, arrows, and sticks had been thrust into the cairn's wooden railing. Pieces of white sheep wool; strips of silk; and red, yellow, blue, and grey pieces of cloth had been tied among the weapons. When the wind blew, the cloths noisily fluttered. How majestic!

Pious Tughuan residents and other Mongghul living near the cairn often came to burn juniper branches, offer roasted highland barley flour and liquor, and prostrate in the four directions on top of the mountain. They beseeched Great Heaven and all deities to protect them, their families, and their crops.

A deep man-made trench was located about nine meters below the cairn on the mountainside.

It had been created by countless clockwise circumambulations around the Tughuan Mountain cairn, testimony to the piety of Tughuan residents and their Mongghul ancestors to Great Heaven and all deities over the past centuries.



7

A GRAVEYARD BANQUET
& A HISTORY LESSON

Monk Nangsuu was praying in his shrine room in the early morning of Mourning Day of the third lunar month when Zanan suddenly rushed in and urged him to come to the village ancestral graveyard to burn sacred papers. All the villagers were waiting for him to come and initiate the mourning rite.

Realizing he should go there quickly because the mourning rite could not be held without him, Monk Nangsuu finished his prayers and went to the graveyard with Zanan, Niruu, and Rnqan trailing behind. The ancestral graveyard was about a ten-minute walk away, on the sloping ground southeast of the Mansion.

The villagers⁵³ were waiting. Each household had brought twelve large steamed wheat bread buns, twenty to thirty large oily pancakes,⁵⁴ many small oily pancakes,⁵⁵ pieces of coarse yellow paper, juniper branches, roasted highland barley flour, and homemade highland barley liquor in a woven-grass basket. Niidoxji and Danjanhua, new brides, were wearing their brand new three-pronged forked Tughuan headdresses. They stood shyly, covering their faces with their long robe sleeves. Three months earlier

⁵³ Generally, the father and his children came to the graveyard on Mourning Day. The wife did not attend, except in the first year of joining her husband's home. At that time, she came to report to her husband's ancestors, by kowtowing, that she had become a Tughuan resident. Afterwards, she no longer paid respect to her own parents' graveyard.

⁵⁴ The diameter was about twenty centimeters.

⁵⁵ The diameter was three centimeters.

during the Lunar New Year period, they had married and moved into Tughuan Village. The two were expected to participate in Mourning Day in the Village ancestral graveyard, thus reporting to the Tughuan ancestors that they had become Tughuan residents.

Two pig carcasses were put on square tables in front of the tomb mounds. The guts had been removed. The pancreas and the large fatty tissue covering the stomach and caul were draped on the back of each pig. These pigs had been offered by Aniruu and Yiila's families in the hope that their wives would give birth to sons in the following year.

Each household had contributed straw that had been put in a large stack. Monk Nangsuu asked Niruu and Rnqan to set it on fire in front of the tomb mounds. Villagers surrounded the large fire and warmed their hands until all the straw had burnt. Then, using shovels, the villagers scooped up a few embers and put them before each of the tomb mounds. All the villagers, one family after another, put juniper branches, roasted highland barley flour, bread buns, and oily pancakes on the burning embers and finished by sprinkling the embers with homemade liquor.

Soon, blue smoke drifted above the graveyard. Village sheep and goats came, eager to eat the bread offerings, and were driven away by the children.

The remaining juniper branches and roasted highland barley flour were put on the fire embers.

Monk Nangsuu stood in front of the incense offering while others stood in rows behind him. He touched his head with some yellow papers first, and then, one by one, touched each person's head, signifying that the villagers' sufferings and misfortunes would be burnt.

After attending to all the participants, he returned to his place and knelt in front of the burning embers. The others also knelt. While burning the sacred yellow papers in the embers, Monk Nangsuu spoke:

On this Mourning Day in the year 1918, your descendants have come to burn papers to all our ancestors. Please be happy! Two new Tughuan Village members, the brides Niidoxji and Danjanhua, kowtow to pay respect to all of you. In addition, Aniruu and Yiila want a son, so please bestow a son on them in the coming year. Please also protect your descendants from illness and crop disasters. Please forget us!⁵⁶ I and others who are your descendants will never forget you!

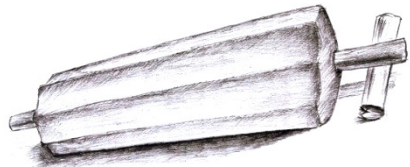
Monk Nangsuu and all the participants kowtowed three times to the ancestors, thereby concluding the ritual.

Monk Nangsuu didn't return to his mansion immediately but sat near the graveyard on straw-covered ground. Rnqan, Niruu, Aniruu, Yiila, and others made a fire with wood the villagers had brought. Sitting around the fire, they began drinking, smoking, and eating oily pancakes. Some young men cut up the pig carcasses and boiled the meat in a big pot. After it was cooked, portions of steaming pork were distributed to each village household.

Sitting there, as they did annually, among the ancestors, they recalled their forebears' lives in Tughuan Village and experienced an active sense of unity and powerful cohesiveness as Tughuan people.

"Please tell us about the origins of the Tughuan people!" implored Aniruu as he stepped forward and offered Monk Nangsuu some liquor.

After stroking his chin stubble with his right hand, Monk Nangsuu took each of the three liquor cups offered, sipped each in turn, and began:



⁵⁶ Dead ancestors who remember their descendants may make these descendants ill.

Originally there were three brothers in our Tughuan Village. When they had grown up, the first married and made his life in what is today's Upper Tughuan Village. The second son also married, but later left to build a new household in today's Lower Tughuan Village. The third son moved to the Xewarishdi area.⁵⁷ The Wughuangmiile Buddha originally wanted to stay in Tughuan Village where it had flown from Tibet, but the Buddha found another Buddha - Tirijijinbu - who had also flown here from Tibet. When Wughuangmiile found her here in Tughuan Village, she flew to Xewarishidi Village and stayed.

When the Third Son moved to Xewarishidi Village from Tughuan Village he enshrined and worshipped Wughuangmiile there. Later, the Third Son became Xewarishidi Nangsuu.

As you all know, Tirijijinbu in our village was a Shadakshari Lokeshvara. She had flown to the Szu⁵⁸ area before she came to live in Tughuan Village.

A Tughuan Village woman married and moved into her husband's home in the Szu area. Her brother, Nanka, lived in her parents' home in our Tughuan Village. One day, when her brother went to visit her in the Szu area, he saw Tirijijinbu enshrined in a room in her home. His sister was childless, while he had four sons. She then asked her brother to allow her to adopt one of his sons. He agreed but asked in return that she give him Tirijijinbu Buddha. She agreed to this exchange.

Later when her brother took one of his sons to her home, her precious Buddha was taken back to her brother's home in Tughuan Village.

After some time had passed, in response to Tughuan villagers' requests, Tirijijinbu was housed in a new temple built by all the residents. However, the role of temple keeper was given to the Nanka families in the Lower Tughuan Village generation after generation, even though Tirijijinbu was venerated by all Tughuan villagers and all who came to worship her.

⁵⁷ Today's Xewarishidi Village, Songduo Township, Huzhu County.

⁵⁸ Today's Anding Village, Wei yuan Town. By 2016, all Mongghul residents in the village had been Sinicized.

Initially, our ancestors came to the Tughuan area because it was an excellent place to live. It was covered in forests that were home to a range of wildlife. The hill at the back of Upper Tughuan Village was similar to a lotus flower, which is why the First Tughuan Living Buddha, Luosangladan,⁵⁹ was born in our Tughuan Village. The third generation of the Tughuan Living Buddha, Lozang Quejinima,⁶⁰ was born in the Sanglang area, in Huarai. He was an influential figure at the Qing Court. His many writings included the *Rgulang Monastery Chronicles* and historical-philosophical works. His works were known not only in China but all over the world.

The hill at the back of the Lower Tughuan Village resembles a phoenix ready to take flight. Its left wing is opened and its right wing is unfolding. That's why Tirijijinbu Buddha wanted to stay here.

Villagers filled Monk Nangsuu's tea bowl and offered him more liquor. The audience was eager to hear Monk Nangsuu tell these stories about their village and history.

"We are Tughuan people so why was our village temple built on Wuxi Village land? And why is the temple taken care of by Wuxi people and not our own? Why did the deities in the temple belong to Upper Tughuan, Lower Tughuan, and Wuxi?" Yiila asked, keen to understand more.

Monk Nangsuu sipped some offered liquor and then said, "I will answer all your excellent questions, but it will take some time to finish this long story and then he continued:

Our ancestor was chief Li Tusi. Our surname, "Li," comes from chief Li Tusi, though we rarely use our surname, but rather, Mongghul names.

⁵⁹ Blo bzang la brtan (?-1679). In 1672, he was elected the *dafatai* 'abbot' of Rgulang Monastery (Anonymous 1993:567, Limusishiden and Stuart 2010:66-67). Tughuan villagers call all the successive incarnations of Tughuan Living Buddha "Hgunqog." They do not use the term "Tughuan Living Buddha." The Mongghul name - Hgunqog - was given by his parents to the first generation of Tughuan Living Buddha.

⁶⁰ Lozang Chokyi Nyima (1737-1802).

Much of our Tughuan farmland was obtained from our chiefs' administrative power.

Tughuan people are descendants of Li Jinwang.⁶¹ He had thirteen sons who all were warriors. Many years later, Li Jinwang's descendants were granted the title of a chief by the central government and governed Xangtang,⁶² Nenbei,⁶³ and Waazari⁶⁴ areas. One year, one of chief Li's descendants came to Wuxi Valley from the Xangtang area. Not knowing his real name, everyone called him Official Li. He found the area with its many trees and pleasant weather to be excellent, further enticing him to stay in Wuxi Valley, in Tughuan Village.

Wanting to stay here, Official Li planned to build a majestic palace to be named Jiulongdian.⁶⁵ He ordered his people to carry timbers from Fooriguan Tang⁶⁶ to Tughuan Village to build the Nine Dragon Palace. Timbers were transported on large wooden-wheeled carts, but each time they reached the village temple, the cart axles broke. This caused great difficulty for Official Li, who then promised Tughuan Village's deity - Tughuan Liuya⁶⁷ - that once he finished building the Nine Dragon Palace, he would build three shrine rooms to her on the site where the axles kept breaking. After making this vow, the cart axles never broke again.

Work to build the palace started in the third lunar month of that year. Several years later, the main work on the Palace had finished. When Official Li was ready to hold the traditional rite of "Raising the Main Ceiling Beam" in his majestic palace, hundreds attended. A red cloth was tied around the main ceiling beam. Gold, silver, paper money in

⁶¹ Li Jinwang (856-908) was a Tang Dynasty (618-907) general.

⁶² Today's Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Haidong City.

⁶³ Today's Ledu Region, Haidong City.

⁶⁴ Today's Xining City.

⁶⁵ Literally 'Nine Dragon Palace'.

⁶⁶ Today's Huoerjun Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County.

⁶⁷ Tughuan female deities refers to two sedan chair *purghan*: (1) Big Female Purghan and Small Female Purghan. Small Female Purghan and Xuanglang Liuya are the same deity. Small Female Purghan has a longer history than Big Female Purghan. The latter is often invited to homes to deal with problems, while Small Female Purghan rarely leaves her temple.

small-denominations, grain, sourdough, and butter were tied between the cloth and the beam to protect the new palace from evils. Before the main ceiling beam was raised, several pieces of baked oily bread, jujubes, and steamed buns were thrown from above the roof beam by the carpenter responsible for constructing the house.

Suddenly, two crows flew onto the main beam. What an evil omen! Official Li immediately shot arrows at them.

The two crows flew away and went to report to the emperor who, having heard the news, was enraged. He believed that he was the Supreme Being in the world, but now it seemed that someone sought to challenge him by building a palace resembling his imperial palace.

And so, in the lunar ninth month, the emperor sent people to Tughuan Village where they stealthily burned down the Nine Dragon Palace. After days of burning, nothing remained but ashes. Official Li was devastated and declared that no Tughuan people should undertake significant affairs in the third and ninth lunar months because he had started building his majestic palace in the third lunar month and it had been burnt to ash in the ninth lunar month. From then on, during these months it was taboo to hold weddings, hold funeral rituals,⁶⁸ build house-enclosing walls, or even travel far away for business. Official Li built no more palaces, but instead built the Mansion that we live in today.

In accordance with his promises to Tughuan Liuya Deity, Official Li built three temple rooms on the site where the cart's axle had broken. Tughuan Liuya Deity was then moved to these shrines located on the east bank of the Wuxi River on a high sloping soil platform two *huali*⁶⁹ from Upper Tughuan Village. Although this site was on the border of Upper Tughuan Village and Wuxi Village, the land belonged to the villagers of Wuxi, not Tughuan. It was valuable land with a good

⁶⁸ When a person died in the ninth lunar month, the family did not hold the funeral until the tenth lunar month. To retard the corpse's decay, the corpse was buried in mud along the banks of the Wuxi River. The mud was changed every two or three days. Once the tenth lunar month arrived, the family held the funeral ritual in their home. The corpse was then taken from their home and cremated outside the village.

⁶⁹ One *huali* is a half-kilometer.

geomantic omen. Tughuan Liuya Deity had wanted to stay and live there, a dream that came true when Official Li built the new temple. Wuxi people allowed the temple to be built on their land under Official Li's command.

However, the Tughuan people were dissatisfied that the temple had been built on another village's land. This created tension between Wuxi and Tughuan villages so they consulted Tughuan Living Buddha and asked him to solve the problem. Summoning people from Wuxi and Tughuan villages, Tughuan Living Buddha declared, "Tughuan Liuya Deity wanted a temple to be built on the site that belongs to Wuxi Village because it is an excellent place for the two deities of Tughuan Village."

No one dared question the deity's decision.

He further said, "I now declare that both Big Female Deity and Small Female Deity will be shared by the three villages of Wuxi, Upper Tughuan Village, and Lower Tughuan Village. The temple's sovereignty is entrusted to Wuxi Village. Wuxi villagers will forever be the temple keepers. I and all subsequent Tughuan Living Buddhas will be responsible for looking after Upper Tughuan Village. This means overseeing everything regarding Tughuan Living Buddha, including enthronement. Responsibility for Lower Tughuan Village is entrusted to Tughuan Nangsuu. This means the Nangsuu official position will only be with the people in Lower Tughuan Village. Meanwhile, Lower Tughuan Village must care for Tirijijinbu Buddha."

Feeling thirsty after telling this story Monk Nangsuu sipped from his tea bowl.

Everyone enjoyed these stories that explained in such detail the distant history of their Tughuan ancestors and historical changes. At that moment, at the site of their ancestral graveyards, remembering their ancestors who had witnessed and experienced both bleak and glorious Tughuan history, they felt great pride in being "Tughuan."

The noon sunshine was very fine, and, somewhat inebriated, Monk Nangsuu removed his right arm from his long-sleeved robe,

and loosened his sash. Under a layer of blue smoke drifting above the graveyard fires, groups of Tughuan men enjoyed themselves, drinking, eating pork, and singing long melodious Mongghul drinking songs and songs of praise. Children chased each other, laughing, shouting, and wrestling.

Every now and then, some drunk men shouted at the boys who ran around after each other, back and forth among the drinking men, ordering them to get away and play somewhere else. A flock of hungry sheep and goats gazed longingly at the bread offered to the ancestors in front of the tombs. When they walked near the bread, the children drove them away but finally, the hungry sheep and goats managed to eat nearly all the bread before it was burned in the usual way. Once the sheep and goats had eaten, they left the graveyard area and did not return.

"Uncle Nangsuu, since Tughuan people have had such a long history, why hasn't our population increased in the past centuries?" asked Zhaxi.

"Ha!"⁷⁰ Monk Nangsuu laughed, and continued:

You know successive Tughuan Living Buddhas were very famous in Beijing,⁷¹ Inner Mongolia,⁷² and other areas far from Amduu.⁷³ Tughuan Living Buddha was awarded the *hutukhtu*⁷⁴ title by the Emperor. Every time a Tughuan Living Buddha visited Inner Mongolia he was piously offered land, camels, horses, gold, silver, and many other valuables. You know that some monks in Rgulang Monastery are Mongolians. They are there because their pious parents offered their sons to a Tughuan Living Buddha, who was a highly ranked living Buddha. Every time the Buddha visited Beijing, the emperor invited him to the imperial palace. The third generation Tughuan Living Buddha, Luoasang Quejinima, had a close

⁷⁰ Laughing sound.

⁷¹ Rjanog 'Beijing'.

⁷² Hara Mongghul refers to modern Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

⁷³ Amduu 'A mdo'.

⁷⁴ 'State master'/'Most knowledgeable man'.

connection with Emperor Qianlong⁷⁵ who allowed him to live in the imperial palace in Beijing.

On every visit to the Rjanog and Hara Mongghul areas, the successive Tughuan Living Buddha traveled with a large retinue, including several residents from Tughuan Village. These people from the same village were their most trusted and loyal people. Once they arrived, some Tughuan people were asked to stay and manage the Tughuan Living Buddha's land and buildings. These people never returned to their natal home but died in these distant lands. Others passed away en route to those faraway places.

The first generation of Tughuan Living Buddha was born in our village, so more and more of our villagers became monks in the monasteries of Rgulang, Mantuu,⁷⁶ Quurisang Srishiji,⁷⁷ Jingang,⁷⁸ Zhangjia,⁷⁹ Zhaci,⁸⁰ Qijia,⁸¹ Zhade,⁸² Mati,⁸³ and Jiaya.⁸⁴ These monasteries were in the service of the Tughuan Living Buddha.

Rgulang Monastery was the largest Mongghul monastery, as well as the largest in north Kugua Noori.⁸⁵ It had forty-eight subordinate monasteries, which explains why so many men became monks and lived in these monasteries.

Tughuan people also moved to other areas in the Seven Valleys for various reasons. For example, Tughuan villagers⁸⁶ in Haliqi were sent to herd livestock on the Tughuan Living Buddha's pasture. Tughuan

⁷⁵ 1711-1799.

⁷⁶ A monastery located in today's Danma Town, Huzhu County.

⁷⁷ A monastery located in today's Songduo Township, Huzhu County.

⁷⁸ A monastery located in today's Danma Town, Huzhu County.

⁷⁹ A monastery located in today's Ledu Region, Haidong City.

⁸⁰ A monastery located in today's Huzhu County.

⁸¹ A monastery located in today's Datong Hui and Mongghul Autonomous County.

⁸² A monastery located in today's Ledu Region, Haidong City.

⁸³ A monastery located in today's Zhangye Region, Gansu Province.

⁸⁴ A monastery located in today's Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province.

⁸⁵ Koko Nor, Kokonor, Koknor, Qinghai Lake.

⁸⁶ Today's Tughuan Village, Danma Town.

people in Rdangyan Village⁸⁷ historically were sent to guard Official Li's graveyard. Tughuan people in Zabazhuang, Wughuang, and Wuxi⁸⁸ were also sent to guard Tughuan Nangsuu's and Official Li's graveyards. Tughuan people in Qita villages⁸⁹ in Haliqi came to manage and cultivate land the Tughuan Living Buddhas bought, as did Tughuan people from Serihguang areas.⁹⁰ This is why the Tughuan population has not increased in the past years.

Seeing some drunk men lying unconscious on the ground, Monk Nangsuu decided to return to his Mansion, but Yiila who had been completely absorbed in the Tughuan stories, stood up, walked to Monk Nangsuu, knelt, and offering him liquor asked, "Dear Uncle Nangsuu what is the Nangsuu title? How did our village get it?"

Monk Nangsuu resumed his seat and explained:

Before Rgulang Monastery was built, there were thirteen tribes in our Mongghul area. There was no monastery so it was difficult for people to practice Buddhism. On his travels to Mongolia, the Third Dalai Lama, Suonanjiasu,⁹¹ passed by a place called Zhejia. We don't know exactly where this was, but we are sure it was near our Seven Valleys. After a thunderstorm that brought heavy rain, a rainbow appeared. The Third Dalai Lama considered this a good omen and decided that a monastery should be established there. That is now Rgulang Monastery.

When Yudanjiacuo,⁹² the Fourth Dalai Lama⁹³ and a Mongolian, was returning to Tibet from Mongolia, he passed by the same place. Lamas living there with the local Mongghul begged him to construct a

⁸⁷ Today's Dangyan Village, Wushi Town.

⁸⁸ The three places are located in today's Wushi Town.

⁸⁹ One Qita Village is in today's Wufeng Township and another is in Donghe Town.

⁹⁰ Today's Tughuan Village, Xunrang Township, and Tughuan Village, Jingyang Township, Datong Hui, and Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County.

⁹¹ Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1543-1588).

⁹² Yon tan rgya mtsho (1589-1616).

⁹³ 1589-1616.

monastery in compliance with the wishes of the thirteen tribal heads in the Mongghul area. Not giving a clear answer, the Fourth Dalai Lama continued on to Tibet.

Then the thirteen tribal heads from Huarin,⁹⁴ Foori,⁹⁵ Langja,⁹⁶ Zhuashidi,⁹⁷ Juucha,⁹⁸ Shdara,⁹⁹ Aja,¹⁰⁰ Zancha,¹⁰¹ Darima,¹⁰² Lanja,¹⁰³ Liandi,¹⁰⁴ Wangqi,¹⁰⁵ and Jisang¹⁰⁶ met to discuss going to Tibet to persuade the Lhasa government to help establish a monastery in the Mongghul area. Finally, having decided to go to Lhasa, the thirteen tribal heads and their retinue started off in the third lunar month when the weather had warmed. They climbed mountains and crossed rivers, overcoming many difficulties and experiencing all kinds of hardships. Some tribesmen wanted to stop and return, but their powerful religious belief pushed them forward. They reached Lhasa before winter.

While meeting the Fourth Dalai Lama, they said that they wanted to establish a monastery in their home area, requested assistance, and suggested that the Fourth Dalai Lama himself return to the Huarai area with them.

The Fourth Dalai Lama responded that he was not able to go, but suggested finding another Living Buddha in Lhasa to accompany them. Later, the Zhuashidi tribal head met Jiase¹⁰⁷ Living Buddha on his way to Zhebang¹⁰⁸ Temple and after explaining their interest, Jiase agreed

⁹⁴ Today's Huarin Village, Danma Town.

⁹⁵ Today's Foori Village, Wushi Town,

⁹⁶ Today's Langja Village, Wushi Town.

⁹⁷ Today's Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town.

⁹⁸ Today's Zhuozhatan Village, Weiyuan Town. By 2016, all villagers had been Sinicized.

⁹⁹ Today's Shdara Mongghul Township, Ledu Region, Haidong City.

¹⁰⁰ Today's Smeen Village, Wushi Town.

¹⁰¹ Today's Gantan Village, Wushi Town.

¹⁰² Today's Darima Village, Danma Town.

¹⁰³ Today's Maqang Village, Hongyazigou Township.

¹⁰⁴ It is unclear where this is today.

¹⁰⁵ Today's Shge Smeen Village, Weiyuan Town.

¹⁰⁶ Today's Jisang Village, Weiyuan Town.

¹⁰⁷ Jiase = Rgyal sras don yod chos kyi rgya mtsho, Jiaseduananyuequijiacuo.

¹⁰⁸ 'Bras spung.

immediately to help.

Another head tribesman, Shdara, also conveyed their idea to Semuhua¹⁰⁹ Living Buddha, who was enthusiastic. Consequently, the Fourth Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, Jiase, and other Living Buddhas met and decided that Jiase should be dispatched to oversee the establishment of the new monastery in Huarai.

Certain Living Buddhas suggested that Nanmusedanmaer¹¹⁰ would be fit for the chief of the monastery and Mehaselama¹¹¹ would be the acting protector of the new monastery.

The Fourth Dalai Lama agreed.

After everything was ready in Lhasa, the thirteen heads and tribesmen began their long return journey in late spring when the weather grew warmer.

They reached their hometown in the tenth lunar month.

Jiase arrived in Huarai and chose Rgulang as the lamasery site. Construction started in 1604. Led by Jiase and the thirteen heads, Rgulang Monastery was built in the Seven Valleys. Once it was completed, Jiase promoted the thirteen heads to official positions, as a reward for their contribution and merits.

Tughuan was not included among the thirteen and did not go to Lhasa to request the construction of the monastery. Nevertheless, Jiase granted Tughuan the title of *nangsuu* based on Tughuan's great financial contribution to, and labor in building Rgulang Monastery. In addition, Jiase eventually granted the *nangsuu* position to the Tughuan Tribe because the well-known Tirijijinbu was a very important Buddha in the Seven Valleys and was enshrined and worshipped in Tughuan Village. Furthermore, Chief Li was a powerful governor in the Mongghul area, under the influence of Tughuan Living Buddha.

It is also likely that our ancestors probably were Chinese because, after their death, they were buried. Later, Tughuan Living Buddha said we should no longer bury our dead, but rather cremate them since we

¹⁰⁹ Sems dpal sprul sku.

¹¹⁰ Mountain God with a Red Face; Ram sras dung dram.

¹¹¹ Heaven Master Riding a Mule; Lhamo Lama.


followed Tibetan Buddhism and had established Rgulang Monastery. Afterward, funeral rites in Tughuan Village were carried out by monks who officiated at all cremations.

Monk Nangsuu was now drunk and his tongue was wagging. Although he had a huge drinking capacity, after finishing several more stories, he was unconscious. Niruu, Rnqan, and the others then took turns carrying him on their backs to Nangsuu Mansion.

Thus concluded the feast in the ancestral graveyard.

8

LAYINSUU'S LIFE

t was the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, the time of the Dragon Boat Festival. People went to grasslands, forests, and riverbanks to picnic. Older children played in groups separately, staying out overnight, cooking for themselves and staying inside holes that they dug and dubbed "homes." Women gathered, chanting and embroidering, while men sat separately, drinking and singing.

On this day, Layinsuu, Jiraqog, and Liuyahua from the Mansion, and several other young women from the Mansion and Tughuan Village sat on the verdant grass on the banks of the Wuxi River. The river flowed slowly to the south. It was so clean that small fish¹¹² and various colored stones were clearly visible. Green willow leaves reflected silver light of strong sunshine in a cloudless sky. Flourishing crops in the fields had grown thigh high and were about to mature. Yellow, white, and violet wildflowers bloomed brightly and colorfully. A pair of orange butterflies chased each other among the flowers, dancing and every now and then, rising lightly. One lit on a round yellow flower and the other immediately landed on top. Their four wings gently moved up and down symmetrically.

Layinsuu and others sat in a circle in a shady place, drinking tea, and eating cold noodles,¹¹³ fried leek-stuffed bread, and boiled pork. They laughed, ate, chatted, and generally amused themselves as if they were the happiest people under great blue Heaven.

Later in the afternoon, Layinsuu was alone, leaning against a

¹¹² Mongghul for female fish is *hgai jighasi* 'pig fish' while the male fish is *mengu jihasi* 'silver fish'. Children never eat river fish. Instead, they feed and pet it with their hands.

¹¹³ Cold noodles include *liangfin* 'noodles made from potato starch'.

willow tree, wrinkling her brows in concentration while embroidering a tobacco bag. Jiraqog came over, sat by her, and asked, "My dear elder sister, what are you thinking now? Are you thinking about that guy - Lasizisirang?"

Layinsuu coquettishly looked at Jiraqog and said, "Ha! It's you! Thinking about that servant, Laxja, in Nangsuu Mansion!"

Layinsuu saw that Jiraqog was embarrassed so she immediately pulled her close and continued, "Sorry! Just now I was recalling my life. You don't know me very well. On this day ten years ago when I was seven years old, I entered the gate of Nangsuu Mansion. I recall that day. I cried madly when my father left, leaving me at the Mansion, while he returned to our home alone in Jughuari,"¹¹⁴ and then her eyes filled with tears.

"Why did you father leave you at the Mansion? Didn't your father like you?" Jiraqog asked, confused.

"My father loved me, but there's more. My mother died after giving birth to me. A couple of years later, Father remarried and my stepmother moved into our home. She mistreated me, giving me little food and few clothes. She often beat me. Father scolded her, but this had no effect because he was an alcoholic just as you said your father was. He also was often drunk so he could not take care of me. One day, an old granny, Monk Nangsuu's father's sister, who married into my natal Jughuari Village, noticed my miserable life. She suggested to Father that he take me to Nangsuu Mansion in Tughuan Village, explaining that I would have a better life in that splendid, wealthy place. That's why I have been living here.

"In Nangsuu Mansion I have become a daughter to my new 'father,' Zanan, a nephew of Monk Nangsuu's. He and his wife were childless. They have been good to me, but not wholeheartedly. I have not been spoiled in the Mansion as if I were their own. I mostly do housework, walk Monk Nangsuu's mule at night, cook, wash clothes for the Nangsuu family, and sweep the courtyard," Layinsuu

¹¹⁴ In today's Jughuari Village, Wushi Town.

continued, wiping tears away with the back of her hand.

The two sat in silence. A while later, Layinsuu resumed, "What about your father? Do you have recent news? I know your father, like mine, was an alcoholic?"

"I did get some recent news and it's sad if it is true. A month ago, when Mother went to purchase embroidery needles and threads from a shop in Wuxi Village, she met a beggar from Haliqi. His home is near Rangdin Village. He told Mother that Father drank even more heavily after Mother and I left. Then one day after getting drunk, he fell from a ladder and died," Jiraqog said and began sobbing.

Layinsuu patted Jiraqog's back, comforting her. She sighed deeply, "Drinking is a weakness of Mongghul men. Every Mongghul household is a distillery, making liquor three to four times a year, or even more frequently if there is a big event that year. Indeed, no alcohol, no festivity. It seems Mongghul can't live without liquor. Alcohol has destroyed many families. I know many Mongghul women suffer because of this. Ironically, the women do the distilling in their homes. Men fighting each other when drunk is very common in our society. Sayings reflect how drinking is part of Mongghul culture:

Tiiwarishdi kijeesa danbiiqii yiiha, Mongghul kijeesa durasi wuqijii.	When Tibetans converted to Buddhism, Mongghul began distilling and drinking liquor.
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Shduri gujidii xaa gujina shdurishdigha xjuuzi laxjini rden, Mongghul shdasa adasa durasi wuqin.	Giraffes extend their necks to eat tree leaves, Mongghul men eagerly search for liquor to drink.
--	--

Yimaa xjuuzi laxji rden, Mongghul durasi wuqin.	While goats try their best to eat green leaves, Mongghul men try their best to drink liquor.
---	--

Alcohol is truly evil, bringing disaster and misfortune to our

Mongghul people," Layinsuu lamented sadly.

While twisting a wild yellow flower between her thumb and forefinger, Jiraqog remarked, "I agree. Liquor is a demon. What does your father do now?"

Layinsuu put her embroidery on the grass next to her, sighed deeply, and continued, "In the first couple of years, Father came regularly to see me at Nangsuu Mansion. I was so happy to see him. Then everything changed suddenly. Actually, it seems he came not to see me but for the liquor. He knew there was plenty of liquor in Nangsuu Mansion. Every time he visited, he would get drunk and not go until it was strongly hinted that it was time for him to leave. What's more, he said the most outlandish things when he was drunk. Then one day, they didn't open the front gate and invite him in. Since then, he has never returned.

"Father behaves strangely when drunk. He likes to go outside the village and wander randomly. Grandmother told me that once when my family was going to build new courtyard walls, Father invited all the clan members and relatives to my home to help on the day the walls were to be built. He provided good food and liquor to all the workers. Later, he got drunk and left. No one knew where he had gone. Sometime later someone saw him and told Grandmother. He had gone to the neighboring village, entered each household in turn, and had asked for more liquor to drink. The family gave him some liquor if they had some. If they had no liquor, he immediately left. After drinking, he would leave the household and go to another. He kicked the gate if they didn't open it. He was not afraid of people nor of the ferocious dogs that were usually tied in the doorway. In fact, even the most ferocious dogs feared him. When they saw this special, dreadful "guest" walk into their courtyards, the dogs cowered and lay down on their stomachs.

"Four or five days later when he returned home, the courtyard walls had almost been built. When people asked him where had he been during the past few days, he answered that he didn't know.

"Several months ago, I heard that one time when Father was drunk, he left home and did not return for a couple of years. I worry and wonder if he is still alive."

Finishing her father's long history, Layinsuu choked with sobs.


Jiraqog gripped Layinsuu's hand tightly. Their family histories were much alike and their suffering was similar. Now they lived in the same "family" and had developed a good relationship as sisters.



When the sun moved westward, reaching the height of three posts, they left the riverbanks and returned to the Mansion to do house chores.

9

PUNISHING A THIEF

ome in!" Monk Nangsuu shouted from his bed in between puffs on his long pipe, at whoever was knocking on his door. The door opened, and Jiraqog came in. "Four men are at the Mansion gate and want to see you. May I ask them to come in?" she asked.

"Who are they?" enquired Monk Nangsuu, tapping his pipe against at the edge of the bed, emptying the brass bowl.

"I don't know, but one man's hands are tied behind his back and the others are holding his arms," replied Jiraqog.

"Go inform Laxja. Tell him to take them directly to the jail," ordered Monk Nangsuu.

Laxja was tall, very powerful, and could even be considered brutal. Every criminal was frightened of him. For that reason, Monk Nangsuu had designated him as the Mansion jailer.

Laxja had grown up in Nangsuu Mansion. When he was a child, his family was poor and did not have enough food in their village - Maqang.¹¹⁵ His grandfather's elder sister had married and moved into Nangsuu Mansion. Following her pleas, Nangsuu Mansion finally took his grandfather and their family members into the Mansion primarily because there was much heavy farm work to be done.

The jail had three rooms. The wardens slept in the room on the right. The middle room was the judgment chamber where handcuffs, foot shackles, strong hide-ropes, sticks, and hide-whips were kept. The room on the left was used to jail prisoners.

Monk Nangsuu entered and sat on a bench. Zanan offered

¹¹⁵ Today's Maqang Village, Hongyazigou Township, Huzhu County.

him a bowl of black tea. Monk Nangsuu realized the men were from Jilog Village,¹¹⁶ Haliqi. They were Tughuan Nangsuu's subjects, therefore Nangsuu was responsible for judging their problems. One man, Tayisirang, was a Jilog Tribe head.

"Tell me the crime this man has committed," Monk Nangsuu said to Tayisirang.

"Dear honorable Nangsuu, Dunqog is a man of my tribe. He is cunning and often makes trouble in the village. Several days ago, late at night, he was caught stealing a horse from his neighbor. We cannot control him so have brought him here under guard. We hope you will teach him a lesson," Tayisirang pleaded.

Monk Nangsuu was hopping mad and immediately declared, "Zanan and Laxja, please give this despicable guy a lesson! Mongghul hate most the thief who steals livestock!" and then he left, slamming the door behind him.

Sitting on the bench Zanan ordered Laxja, "Take off Dunqog's robe. Hang him from the roof beam! Beat him ruthlessly!"

Seeing the big, tall man with stubble on his big face, Dunqog was scared to death and collapsed to the ground.

Undeterred, Laxja whipped Dunqog until his face and upper body skin were red with blood. Dunqog begged ceaselessly for mercy, "I won't steal again! I won't do a bad thing in the future!"

"We'll make sure you don't steal in the future!" Laxja scolded and continued whipping until eventually Dunqog became quiet and his head dropped onto his chest. Taking a ladle of cold water Laxja threw it in Dunqog's face, immediately reviving him.

Zanan winked at Laxja, hinting that he should take Dunqog down and put him in the jail room.

In the quiet of the night, Laxja lay on the bed in the jail room. A twisted wick from a bowl of sesame oil up on an iron support beam lit the room. He was guarding Dunqog, checking him every now and then. The beating had tired him out.

As she finished washing the cooking pot, Jiraqog saw that the

¹¹⁶ Today's Jilog Mongghul Village, Danma Town.

light in Laxja's room was on. Surely Laxja was there. She knocked on the jail door with an earthenware pot of boiled brick tea and several oily pancakes. The door opened. Laxja was pleasantly surprised. He sprang from his bed, declaring, "I thought you were sleeping!"

"No, I just finished the evening kitchen work and saw your light on through the window, so I came to visit. Have some tea and bread. You must be tired and hungry," Jiraqog said putting the bread and tea on a table.

"Thank you so much!" Laxja exclaimed, and began eating and drinking.

"No problem! You are kind to me," Jiraqog murmured gently.

Laxja had been assigned to deal with criminal justice in Nangsuu Mansion so it was common for criminals' friends and family members to offer him bribes. With the money that he secretly received, he had bought cloth, threads, needles, sugar, and other gifts for Jiraqog.

A hissing sound from the brightly burning twisted wick was followed by the formation of one large and two small, round black "light flowers" that caused the light to grow weak and dim. Jiraqog flicked the two "light flowers" away with her finger restoring the bright light.

"A man from our village was sent to our Mansion to inquire about the criminal's status. His family members want him released as early as possible," said Jiraqog.

"He has committed a serious crime. You know how much we hate a thief that steals livestock. Monk Nangsuu must cut one of his Achilles' tendons as punishment. The only way to prevent him from suffering this punishment is to get his family members to beg the Old Lady, Monk Nangsuu's mother. If she asks Monk Nangsuu, the criminal will be released from the penalty and can return home soon. Monk Nangsuu is filial and listens to his mother. Many criminals have been exempted from punishment after the Old Lady interceded," explained Laxja.

At about this time, Liuyansuu came into the kitchen to see if the fire in the kitchen hearth was banked well. Seeing the jail light on, she quietly walked near the paper paneled window and peeped through a hole. Seeing Jiraqog and Laxja sitting together on the edge of the bed, holding hands, she left quickly.

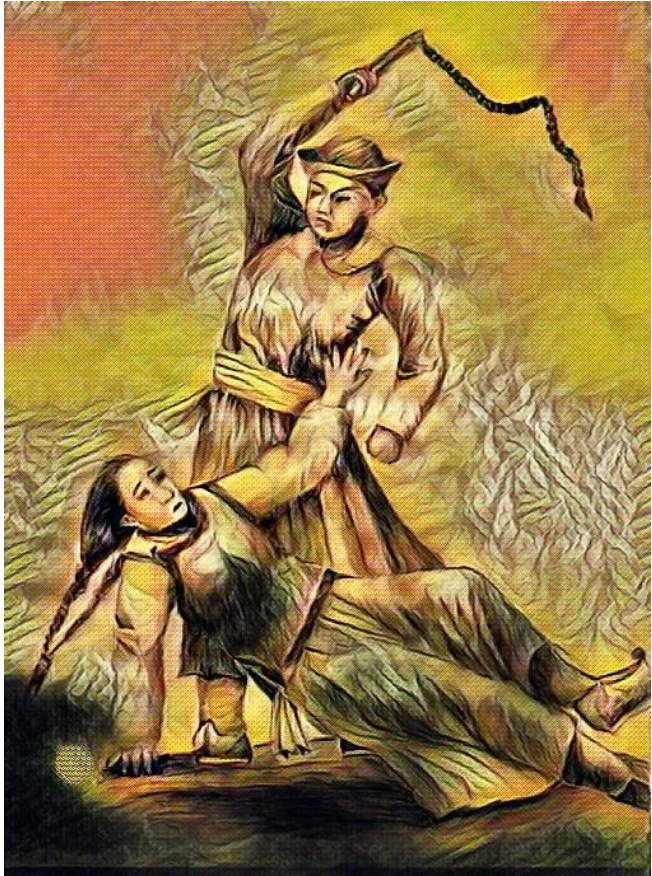
After Jiraqog secretly told the villagers how to save the criminal, they soon came to meet the Old Lady, giving her a large amount of silver and also slipping Laxja a small amount.

The Old Lady asked Jiraqog to report to her before the criminal was to have his Achilles tendon cut.

The next night, as Zanan, Laxja, Niruu, Rnqan, and others got ready to sever the criminal's tendon, the Old Lady came to the jail-yard shouting, "Monk Nangsuu! Don't cut. Please release him!"


Hearing this, Monk Nangsuu shook his head helplessly and ordered his men to set the criminal free immediately.

That night, Dunqog returned to his home.



10

LAYINSUU AND JIRAQOG AT A LOVE SONG MEETING

s dawn broke, Layinsuu and Jiraqog mounted their horses and riding up a zigzag path, arrived at the top of the Rdangyan Mountains from where they had a good view of the villages scattered in the sub-valleys and flatlands of the Haliqi Darima¹¹⁷ areas. They rode their horses fast down the mountains, the ends of their woolen bag on the saddles behind swinging up and down as their horses galloped along the path.

They were headed to a big love song meeting held in Wuuzin¹¹⁸ annually on the second day of the second lunar month. The love song meeting was open to everyone. The lanes were crowded with hawkers, peddlers, and various vendors. Mongghul wearing colorful clothing came from surrounding areas. Many people paraded back and forth in the lanes among the huge crowd making small purchases. It was a much-anticipated opportunity for Mongghul to show off their colorful, embroidered clothing. It was, in fact, a big display of Mongghul clothes. Young people tried to find lovers, and elders came to meet their relatives. Many Mongghul sat in circles on the ground, drinking, joking, chatting, and singing love songs. Everyone was allowed to join any of the circles if they enjoyed love songs and jokes.

There was a platform where the best love song singers gathered and competed in singing Mongghul love songs. It provided

¹¹⁷ Today's Danma Town, Huzhu County.

¹¹⁸ Today's Weiyuan Town, the Huzhu County seat.

an excellent opportunity to find a date or a lover.

Thinking about this, Layinsuu felt deeply happy, sure Lasizisirang would appear at the meeting. She again urged her horse to gallop.

Having learned that Layinsuu and Jiraqog had gone to the love song festival early in the morning, Laxja decided to also attend and have a nice time with Jiraqog. Without seeking Monk Nangsuu's permission, he mounted a horse and left the Mansion, following in the path of Layinsuu and Jiraqog.

When he reached the top of the Rdangyan Mountains, he found a group of Mongghul women working in fields by the path. Some were digging up the red soil with shovels and putting it on the side path in back-baskets that were carried by others into the field where the soil would be burned, pulverized, and used as fertilizer.

Seeing this young man dismount and walk toward them alone, they stopped working and standing still, stared at Laxja. Laughing, one of the women lustily exclaimed, "What a handsome young man! Come chat with us married women!"

Laxja was hugely embarrassed. He urged his horse to trot more quickly. As he passed, a couple of women opened the front of their long woolen robes up to their thighs, exposing their naked legs and pubic hair.

Mortified, Laxja again urged his horse on while turning his head away from the women. As he passed, the women continued laughing at him. One shouted, "Coward! You dare not stop and enjoy several vaginas at the same time. Ha! Ha! ..."

Even later, Laxja still imagined he heard the women laughing at him.

On the eastern outskirts of Wuuzin Town, Layinsuu and Jiraqog suddenly heard the familiar sound of shouting behind them. Seeing Laxja galloping towards them, they pulled their horses to a stop and dismounted.

"You have come too!" exclaimed Jiraqog excitedly, holding the reins of Laxja's horse as she dismounted. Layinsuu was also glad to

see that Laxja had come and smiled to herself. Holding the horse reins, they walked on.

By now, more people had appeared and were walking toward the high adobe town wall in which there was a large, half-oval-shaped hole. The gate was completely open and people were passing through. Some rode, holding the reins of their horses or mules, but most were on foot.

As the three walked closer to the center inside the high adobe wall, they passed small, low houses lining each side of the narrow and dirty lane. Some houses were built entirely from wood, while others had wooden roofs and adobe brick walls. Two-story buildings were rare. Beside the doors of the houses were piles of coal ash waiting to be collected. In the distance, the drum tower marking the center of town was visible. Hawkers, peddlers, and other business people yelled to passersby to come and have a look at their products and urging them to make purchases. Streams of people busily came and went. Bustling sounds mingled with sounds of hawkers yelling, talking, clapping, and melodious love songs. The three sensed this was a big town compared to their home area, with many people and noises, in sharp contrast to the peace and quiet of their village.

Many Mongghul participated and marched among the huge crowd, showing off their clothes. Some young Mongghul women wore green and blue round-brimmed hats with flowers attached that stood upright. A towel inside the hat provided padding to avoid injury to the wearer, and to prevent sweat from streaming down their faces. Others wore hats of white felt, lambskin, or foxskin. They wore long silver earrings, and coral and turquoise necklaces. The long sleeves of some young women's gowns were edged with red, yellow, green, blue, and purple cloth. Sleeveless short gowns were worn over the top of the long gown. Colorful rectangular pieces of embroidery "pockets" were sewn on the right upper part of the sleeveless gown. Women wore decorations made with three or four square-shaped embroidered sections that hung on their right thighs. A string of old Qing dynasty copper coins was attached to their sashes, where it

jingled like bells on a horse as the women walked along the street. Their shoes were embroidered with various colorful patterns. They were very joyful, perhaps the happiest women under Great Heaven.

Many Mongghul men also wore hats made from foxskin or lambskin, and white felt hats, or green and blue round-brimmed hats. Their shirts were embroidered on the upper part of the right pocket while over this they wore an unlined sheepskin robe. The legs of their trousers were stuffed into their long boots. A decorated dagger sheath dangled on the right side of their waists. Their colorfully embroidered tobacco pipes were tucked into the sash across their chests.

Some old people wore black felt hats, as well as long thick woolen garments with sashes, and pairs of woolen pants with loose crotches and baggy seats.

Walking, looking, and talking the three soon arrived at a magnificent three-storied wooden building with carved beams and painted rafters. Wind bells hung from the four corners. A crossroad brimming with people, livestock, and horse-drawn carts passed under the base of the house.

Gazing at the tower, Layinsuu mused, "I have heard about this tower. Monk Nangsuu said it shares a history with Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. It must be centuries old."

They turned south, where many people were gathered around a soil platform, listening to love songs. The Mongghul singers were singing in Mongghul. Layinsuu realized it was the "Love Song Platform" that was well-known among Mongghul in the Seven Valleys.

"Layinsuu, shall we find an inn where we can tie our horses, please?" Laxja asked.

"Sure! We can enjoy the love songs gathering after taking care of the horses," Layinsuu enthusiastically responded.

Walking through a doorway, they found a courtyard where many horses were tied to poles. An employee welcomed them and helped tie up their horses.

They then returned to the small round, earth platform.

Because Mongghul gathered here to sing love songs, the platform was protected. It had not been flattened and could not be used for housing construction. The platform was called Turen Tai¹¹⁹ by the local Chinese.

Mongghul men, women, old, and young, squeezed around the platform. Sometimes, just one person sang solo, and sometimes two sang antiphonally. The singers could be men, women, old, and young. A young man began singing:

Ghajarishdi bosa qasiwa,
Ken ujesada qighaanna.
Dabangla sojin aaguwa,
Ken ujesada duralana.

Snow on the ground,
White for whomever to see.
Dressed-up women,
Men love them.

Ula szarini bulogwa,
Teni wuqisa hughui datinna.
Jirihga yidijin nukuariwa,
Tena ujesa hughui saihanna.

A spring at the foot of a mountain,
Its water is extremely sweet.
Beloved lover,
She is so beautiful.

When he finished his two love song stanzas, the whole audience responded, "*Ohohog ai!*"¹²⁰ praising the beautiful voice that sang such wondrous love songs.

This familiar song made Layinsuu's eyes pop. "Could it be Lasizisirang himself? I have missed him so much," Layinsuu thought.

"Layinsuu, it's him – Lasizisirang! He came once to Nangsuu Mansion, in winter, to pay his tax. I know he's a great singer from Luxuu in Haliqi," Laxja exclaimed, carefully examining the singer who wore a white sheepskin robe and a foxskin hat.

Layinsuu quickly and boldly climbed to the top of the soil platform, came up to the singer and draped a white strip of silk around his neck as he bent his head.

¹¹⁹ Mongghul Platform, located in Number One Middle School, Weiyuan Town in 2018.

¹²⁰ A sound suggesting praise and jealousy.

"Are you from Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion? You are Layinsuu, right?" the singer asked excitedly.

Layinsuu was speechless. She stared lovingly at Lasizisirang. Four hands gripped each other tightly. Other singers had a peculiar look in their eyes, as they stared at Lasizisirang and Layinsuu, wondering what special relationship the two had.

Lasizisirang said goodbye to the other singers and holding Layinsuu's hand, descended the slope towards Jiraqog and Laxja.

After entering a restaurant, they ordered braised pork and noodles. Layinsuu and Jiraqog drank black tea while Lasizisirang and Laxja enjoyed locally distilled liquor. They chatted until the two men were tipsy. As the sun sank in the west, they returned to the inn where they had registered two rooms.

Layinsuu and Lasizisirang shared a small, low-rise room. A small bed had been built into the left corner and a small brazier was in the right corner. Smoldering horse dung fueled the brazier. Beside it was some chopped wood. Two small, low chairs had also been provided.

Lasizisirang made a fire with the chopped wood while Layinsuu boiled a pot of tea. Lasizisirang unbuckled his sash. The two sat by the brazier warming their hands, drinking tea.

"I missed you so much. I fell in love with you the first time I saw you in Nangsuu Mansion. Only you of all the Mansion's many visitors have moved my heart," declared Layinsuu, picking up her tea bowl from the edge of the brazier.

"I feel the same! Your image has been in my mind since the day you bid me goodbye at your mansion gate. I came to participate in the love song meeting today, hoping to meet you. My wish has come true. You are with me now, and in a room where there is only us," Lasizisirang murmured, taking Layinsuu in his arms.

Flushed with joy, Layinsuu rested her cheek on Lasizisirang's chest and could feel and hear the throbbing of his heart. That and his strong embrace moved her. She felt so happy and comfortable that her eyes sparkled with tears.

"Thank you, Great Heaven for letting us be together!" exclaimed Lasizisirang, clasping Layinsuu's hands in his own.

"What a big town! What a large love song festival! So many Mongghul from different Mongghul areas have come to enjoy themselves. Their bright, colorful clothes adorn and revitalize the cold, early spring. It's a great chance to learn new embroidery skills and patterns from many Mongghul areas. I want to come again next year!" Layinsuu exclaimed emotionally.

"Sure! You must come every year to enjoy this festival where thousands congregate and Mongghul are proud to wear and parade in their best clothes. In many ways, this is a Mongghul clothing show," Lasizisirang responded.

"The way Mongghul wear their costumes and move in the crowds is exactly how proud peacocks exhibit their plumage when spreading their feathers. Most Mongghul girls begin learning embroidery between the ages of eight to ten. Their mothers, sisters, aunts, and older village women are their teachers. Festivals and gatherings give them opportunities to view other women wearing and showing off their best embroidery. They embroider in their free time, for example, on rainy and snowy days, after supper under the light of dim wool-wick rapeseed oil lamps, and during rest breaks from field and housework. Sometimes they gather in village lanes to embroider.

"Mongghul clothes in the annual religious festivals and love song meetings are extremely colorful and bright. Mongghul embroidery is varied, vivid, and colorful. It is simply exquisite," summarized Layinsuu.

It was quiet, except for the sound of the boiling teapot. Weak flames from the burning wood lit their faces in the dark room.

"I have forgotten to give you the gift I brought," Layinsuu suddenly remembered. She stood, went to her woolen bag, and took out an embroidered tobacco bag wrapped in a piece of black cloth.

Holding it in his hands, Lasizisirang carefully examined it under the light of the flame. "What a nice tobacco bag!" he exclaimed. Sewn from black cloth it featured patterns of peonies at the top, coins

in the middle, and an auspicious symbol¹²¹ at the bottom. A string of coral, agate, and Qing Dynasty copper coins, and a hook for cleaning the pipe's brass bowl were sewn onto the opening of the bag. A few yellow tassels were attached to the bottom of the bag.

"Thank you so much! You are so kind to me," Lasizisirang exclaimed again, after examining the pouch. He stood up and putting the tobacco pouch aside, quickly walked forward and embraced Layinsuu tightly.

"I began sewing the tobacco bag for you on the day you left Nangsuu Mansion," confessed Layinsuu shyly.

"May I send a matchmaker to your mansion to propose that you become my wife?" Lasizisirang asked affectionately.

"Sure, as long as your parents, my parents on Nangsuu's side, and Monk Nangsuu allow it," Layinsuu answered happily.

Kissing her hot lips, he lifted her onto the bed, removed his white sheepskin robe, and rolled under it. After a long while, they were exhausted and resumed talking about Lasizisirang's subjects, Tughuan Nangsuu's family members and clan members; and about the kindness and enmity in Nangsuu Mansion.

Later that night Jiraqog and Laxja walked down the lanes. It was dark except for the light from variously shaped containers, rectangular, squarish, balloon-shaped and round, hanging along both sides of the lanes above the shops and inns.

Some men had their arms around women's shoulders while other couples held hands as they came and went along the lanes. Some embraced in sheltered places. Others flirted among the trees and bushes located in the southern outskirts of the town.

Jiraqog and Laxja, free from daily family chores, walked and talked about this and that.

After Laxja recounted the scene of his chance encounter on

¹²¹ The symbol is known as *dalangii ghuran* (literally, 'get together three'; C, *fuguibuduantou* 'riches and honor unbroken') and may be translated as 'the road continues' 'unbroken road'. Local embroiders comment that it signifies auspiciousness.

Rdangyan Mountains, Jiraqog teased, "Coward! Don't you have enough daring to take advantage of such a good opportunity! If I were you, I would have gone over to see their reaction? Please be braver if you have a future opportunity!"

Laxja nodded bashfully.

The long, deep sound of a slowly sung love song could be heard from far away:

Gusiga nasiji gua xuuqari nasi xja,	The eagle flew away, but the
	pigeon did not,
Xuuqari nasa gharisza	The bell tinkled when the eagle
hunghuarini dangtiguna.	flew away.
Ganni baini hari rjaji sgilini harixji	Her body returned, but her heart
gua,	did not,
Sgilini hara rsa bu kidingi	How much I would think of her if
muulaguna.	her heart returned to me.

"Only a love song can answer one of the most complicated questions in the world: What is love?" mused Jiraqog after listening to this song.

"Love songs feature the most beautiful language in the world. They capture reality so perfectly," sighed Laxja and they again clutched each other's hands.

11

RGULANG MONASTERY MONKS
VISIT TUGHUAN MANSION

Built on a mountainside, Rgulang Monastery was extremely beautiful and peaceful. The temples featured gilded halls with golden yellow roofs. An ancient sandalwood tree grew on one side of the front gate of the Great Scripture Hall while a cypress tree grew by the other side. The two trees had been planted shortly after the monastery was built. Green pine trees covered the opposite mountain. A distant mountain in the valley remained snow-capped even in summer. Viewed together, all of this - the mountains, old trees, halls, and pavilions - imparted a quiet, extremely solemn atmosphere to this sacred Mongghul monastery.

After the annual Eighth Day Religious Mask Dance was held on the sixth lunar month, the monastery again returned to its usual peaceful state. Monks dedicated forty-five days to improving their knowledge of the scriptures in the monastery. They started on the fifteenth day of the sixth lunar month and concluded their study late in the seventh lunar month. During this time, they ate only breakfast and lunch. In the daytime, they chanted scriptures in their temple halls with others who joined them. In the evenings, they went to their rooms to continue various rituals. During this time, they were strictly prohibited from leaving the monastery or engaging in anything but chanting and study of the scriptures.

On the eighth day of the eighth lunar month, as was the custom, the monks prepared to worship four important Buddhas. In the early morning, they mounted their horses and rode to different areas. Some went to Zhuashidi Village in Haliqi to worship

Zhunmaasangqan Buddha, where they were offered meals by Zhuashidi villagers. Others went to Wughuang Village to venerate Jiushidengunbu Buddha. Some visited Xewarishidi Village to worship Wughuangmiile Buddha, while others went to Tughuan Village where they paid homage to Tirijijinbu Buddha.

In the early morning on the eighth day of the eighth lunar month, about one hundred monks on horseback arrived in Tughuan Village. They walked directly to Tirijijinbu Temple located in Lower Tughuan Village behind Nangsuu Mansion.

Tughuan villagers received them warmly with strips of silk in front of the temple and secured their horses in the front courtyard. The monks walked into the backyard where the temple stood. One by one, in a line, they entered the temple room. Each lit a butter lamp for Tirijijinbu and paid homage by touching the table in front of the Tirijijinbu Buddha statue with their foreheads and chanting scriptures. Meanwhile, they each turned a string of prayer beads. They then circumambulated the temple three times in a clockwise direction.

After the rituals, the monks were ushered into the courtyard, seated, and offered black tea and bread.

At this moment, Monk Nangsuu arrived, exclaiming, "Oh, all you monks have arrived! Wonderful! Now, I invite all of you into the Mansion."

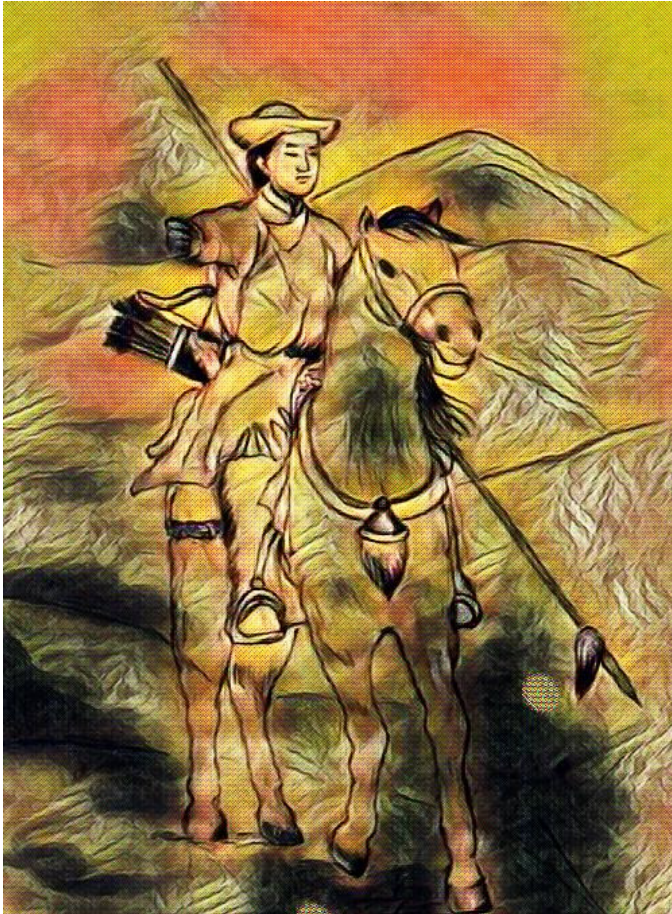
They followed Monk Nangsuu to a fire at the courtyard center where incense was smoldering. People from the Mansion came out and warmly welcomed each monk with a strip of silk and two loaves of baked bread. A little butter was put on the top of the loaves, which were placed on a square table in front of the front gate.

The monks immediately climbed to the top of the Mansion walls and circumambulated in a clockwise direction, chanting scriptures, and turning strings of prayer beads in their hands.

The one hundred monks wearing yellow hats and red robes walking slowly around the top of the Mansion wall created quite a spectacle as if many red-clad soldiers were patrolling the Mansion.


After finishing their devotions, the monks were invited into the shrine courtyard and served tea, roasted highland barley flour, butter, pork, mutton, and beef. A high-level senior monk sat next to Monk Nangsuu and announced, "Now those living in the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion will enjoy peace and prosperity. The Mansion will be as strong as a mountain."

"Thank you! Each year, all you monks come to my Mansion to chant and circumambulate, bringing security and happiness. Please eat and drink well!" Monk Nangsuu responded, urging Zanan, Hgunqog, and Mamadii to eat well and offering more food.



12

LASIZISIRANG'S HOME IN LUXUU VILLAGE

asizisirang's village, Luxuu, was located at the foot of a hill. Some villagers lived in Luxuu Valley, while others lived on the plain at the entrance to Luxuu Valley. Lasizisirang's home was on the plain. Willow trees had been planted along the village lanes and on the hill slopes.

In the north of his home's small courtyard stood a two-story wooden building with an open veranda that featured a thigh-high rail. Three rooms were on the second floor. The one on the left was the family shrine, the middle one served as the main room, and the room on the right was Lasizisirang's grandparents' bedroom. A red chest containing wheat flour sat in the main room near the back wall. Guests placed their gifts here when they came to visit. Some important family furniture was positioned around the room.

A wooden ladder led from the left of the room on the first floor through a square opening to the center of the second floor. A wooden cover was used to close the opening from above at night when the grandparents slept or when people were not allowed up to the second floor. Usually, it was kept open. Wood for a fire in winter was stored in the left room of the first floor. No walls separated the middle and right adjoining rooms on the first floor. Horses and mules were stabled in the big room all year round.

Above the corridor was a single room where Lasizisirang's father slept at night to guard against thieves. In the east and west parts of the house were single storied rooms. The west rooms comprised the kitchen, sleeping areas, and storerooms while the east

rooms stored straw that was used to feed livestock and start a fire in the kitchen hearth.

A horse-drawn wooden cart, a stone-roller, shovels, farming forks, brooms, saddles, and horse bridles were all stored in the corridor.

Every morning, Lasizisirang's grandparents offered juniper incense on a small round platform in the courtyard. A big pit¹²² was near the platform.

White soil smeared on the outside walls of Lasizisirang's mansion made them extremely smooth. This explains the local Chinese saying, "Mongghul like to coat their courtyard walls if they have money, while Chinese construct houses if they have money." White stones at the four corners on top of the wall signified happiness and prosperity for the family.



One busy day in Lasizisirang's home after the annual heavy farm work of planting and seeding, the family began various household chores. In a sunny place in the upper courtyard, Lasizisirang's father, Limusirang, was weaving a woolen gown for Lasizisirang. Not only was Limusirang the tribe's head in his village, but he was also a weaver and was often invited to visit households that had acquired a supply of yarn. He loaded his portable loom pieces onto a donkey, visited the home, and worked for a daily wage. But he mostly worked from his own home, using yarn that customers

¹²² *Tugun* 'pit'. Historically, Mongghul households had a pit in the courtyard center where livestock dung, human urine, and ash were collected. Children also defecated here. Adults urinated here, but only at night. Courtyard dirt and dust were swept into the pit. When full, the pit contents were dug out and used as manure. Adults defecated inside the pigsty that was built inside the family compound near the front gate.

brought him. The yarn was weighed and the price fixed according to the weight of the yarn and the length of the cloth to be produced. He wove woolen jackets, underclothes, sashes, and sacks made from goat-hair. Most customers paid in copper coins and grain, while poorer families provided labor to help cultivate Limusirang's huge fields.

Limusirang sat on a chair in front of a tall frame of the loom on which he made woolen gowns. His hands worked at the level of his forehead. He shuttled yarn as he wove in the frame¹²³ and then tightened the yarn with a piece of wood designed for that purpose.¹²⁴ He hummed drinking tunes as he worked. When tired, he rested by leaning against the house pillar and smoking.

Lasizisirang's grandmother sat around the horse-dung and straw-fueled fire at the center of the *pei*. She spun her prayer wheel in her left hand and fingered a string of prayer beads in her right hand while chanting scriptures. Suddenly, smoke rising from the fire caught in her throat causing her to burst into a series of dry coughs. She quickly covered the smoldering fire with wood chips.

On a corner of the *pei*, Lasizisirang's grandfather was busily working with an earthenware jar while also mumbling scriptures. He put two sheepskins inside the jar, soaking them in order to make white sheepskin robes for his grandchildren. His hands worked busily inside the water-filled jar. He added two handfuls of black stained crystal salt, two big bowls of flour, and five round, white pieces of yeast. He then put the jar in a corner of the *pei* to allow the concoction to ferment.

All local men knew how to tan skins. To begin, they washed the skins, scraped off the fat tissue, and dried the skins on the roof. Several days later, when they were ready to be soaked, the skins were put into a clean earthenware jar filled with water. Amounts of salt, flour, and yeast calculated according to the number of skins, were mixed into the water in the jars. The soaking lasted fourteen days in

¹²³ *Guzi* 'loom frame'.

¹²⁴ *Wulidi* 'sword', a piece of wood used to tighten the yarn.

the summer and twenty-one in the winter. When this process was completed, the skins were washed in the river, and next put out to dry in a shady place in the household. They were then ready to be used by tailors who cut and sewed according to the desired design.

Lasizisirang's grandfather finished his work. At that moment, noticing sunlight coming through the skylight¹²⁵ had moved from the west wall of the *pei* to the middle of the north wall, he realized it was lunchtime. "Granny,¹²⁶ it's time for lunch. Are you hungry?" he asked his wife.

Granny did not respond, completely absorbed in repeating her Buddhist scriptures.

In the courtyard, Lasizisirang's mother, Lamukari, was relocating the manure from the courtyard pit at the center of the courtyard. This accumulated manure was taken out to the front gate, on average, once a month when the courtyard pit was full. Using a shovel, Lasizisirang's younger brother dug the manure from the pit and transferred it into a basket woven of feather-grass slung on his mother's back. She trembled every time a shovelful of manure was dumped into the basket.

Lasizisirang's mother wore a waistcoat or sleeveless jacket¹²⁷ that reached her waist and covered her chest and back. The sleeveless jacket buttoned on the right side. The lower part was slit in front and behind, and hung on her body, swinging as she walked. One button was at the collarbone and another button was under the armpit on the right side. Lamukari's jacket had been made by Lasizisirang's grandfather from both sheep and goat wool and edged with a red cotton cloth. Whenever Lamukari went outside to carry dung for fuel in a back basket, soil, or earth, she wore this jacket. It was coarse, durable, and thick so it protected her from injuries that might result

¹²⁵ *Tenchuang* refers to a large, square hole that serves as a vent for smoke and allows sunlight to enter through the ceiling of the room where family members sit and sleep.

¹²⁶ A Mongghul couple calls each other "Granny and Grandpa" when they are old.

¹²⁷ *Huuguazi* 'waistcoat', 'sleeveless jacket'.

from carrying heavy loads on her back.

Some called this jacket a "military" shirt. Mongghul women wore this type of jacket that the Emperor had bestowed on them in special recognition of the glorious days of the past when women had fought beside their husbands defending the Empire frontier.

Mongghul soldiers wore this same sleeveless jacket, but one made from red cotton rather than wool. The soldiers' jacket was trimmed with yellow cotton and had a circular patch of white on the front and back. These circles featured three Chinese characters that read "Mongghul soldier" and the name of his local chief.

Suddenly the family dog barked from the corridor. The front gate opened and Lasizisirang came in, leading his horse. Seeing his parents busily at work, Lasizisirang looked embarrassed.

"Where have you been my dear son?" Limusirang asked, stopping work and gazing at Lasizisirang who had left the home the day before.

"I went to Rgulang Monastery to pay homage," Lasizisirang answered. In fact, he had gone to meet Layinsuu. The couple had spent the night together at a local home.

"You're kidding! You must have gone there to meet a girl, right? Someone told me that you were with a short, thin girl walking hand in hand on the second day of the second lunar month in Wuuzin. The girl must be from the Fulaan Nara area, according to the description of her clothes," Limusirang said knowingly.

His secret discovered, Lasizisirang lowered his head.

"I now tell you we have sent a matchmaker to your maternal uncle's home. His family has already agreed that we may send gifts to his home, which means that your maternal uncle and his family members have consented to give his daughter, Lirixjinsuu, to be your future wife. She is tall and strong and will be a good wife for you. You mother, grandparents, and I are all happy Lirixjinsuu will join our family," Limusirang continued.

"No! I don't want her as my wife. I've already found one from Fulaan Nara! You are not considering my feelings. At the appropriate

time, I'll let you know when to send a matchmaker to her home," Lasizisirang resumed.

"I don't think that girl is a good match for you. I heard she is short and thin. You know Lirixjinsuu very well. You grew up and played together. She is tall, strong, and works hard. She suits you. We are relatives. This marriage will create a closer, more intimate relationship between me and your maternal uncle," explained Limusirang.

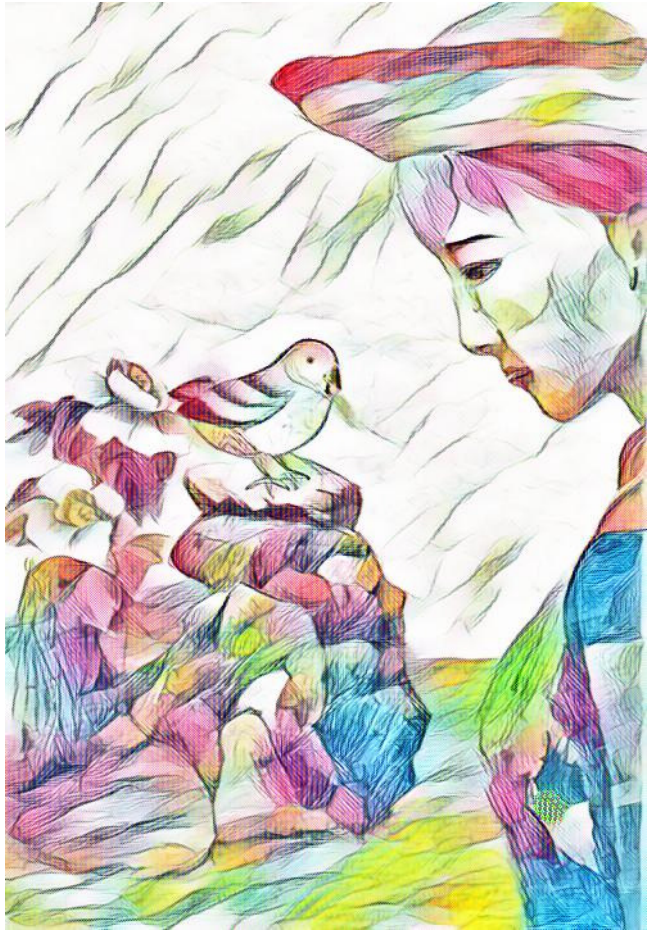
"I don't care. I don't like Lirixjinsuu!" exclaimed Lasizisirang firmly.

Lamukari was annoyed by this father-son exchange. She put her basket on the ground and announced, "I agree with your father. Lirixjinsuu is tall and strong. If she married into our home, she would be a good farm worker and a great help to our family both inside and outside the home. In contrast, that short, thin girl couldn't do much work. I'm sure she cannot load a full woolen bag on a horse by herself and cannot carry a full big basket on her back. Why do you want to marry her? I really don't understand what you're thinking? Are you going to invite this weak girl into my home, bring her to the table in our main hall, pay homage to her, and not ask her to do any work?!" Lamukari demanded, trembling with rage.

At this juncture, Lasizisirang's grandfather walked out from the kitchen room holding his walking stick in hand. "You all, please be quiet," he said. Walking near Lasizisirang, he said gently, "My grandson, please tell me. Who is the girl you have met? Where does her family live?"

"She is from our Lord Tughuan's Nangsuu Mansion. Her name is Layinsuu," Lasizisirang replied slowly, his head down on his chest.

"What nonsense! Absolutely impossible! Please forget this! You should know your position. We are Tughuan Nangsuu's commoners. They are our lords. I know that girl. She is the adopted daughter of Zanan, one of Monk Nangsuu's nephews. Zanan will never allow Layinsuu to marry out of the Mansion. He will probably ask a more suitable man to marry her and come to live in the Mansion in the future. We have never married and moved into the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. This is true for all Tughuan Nangsuu commoners in many Mongghul areas. They have never entered into marriage with anyone from Nangsuu Mansion. Our duty to Tughuan Nangsuu is to pay respect, pay land taxes, and obey their commands,"




Lasizisirang's grandfather abruptly concluded.

Speechless and dispirited, Lasizisirang went to his room.

13

TUGHUAN VILLAGERS CARRY DEITIES
THROUGH THEIR VILLAGE TERRITORY

t was the eighteenth day of the fifth lunar month. The green crops of Tughuan Village had grown high enough to hide a pheasant. That night after supper, village elders and at least one male representative from each household gathered at the village temple to prepare for the *hguara* ritual¹²⁸ to be held early the morning of the next day.

The village temple was located on a high, steeply sloping earthen platform on the east bank of the Wuxi River. There were three shrine rooms in the north part of the temple courtyard. Big Female Deity and Small Female Deity were put on a chest in the central room. No walls separated the three adjoining rooms. The temple-keeper lived in a three-room building on the west side of the yard. There was a small round garden at the courtyard center where visitors offered incense. The front gate was built facing south, in the direction of Tughuan Village.

Temple sovereignty was attributed to Wuxi Village since the temple was built on the land of the Wuxi people. The two female deities were shared by Tughuan and Wuxi villagers. The *hguara* rite was jointly held annually by Upper Tughuan, Lower Tughuan, and Wuxi villages.

¹²⁸ Hguara refers to a designated date in the fourth, fifth, and sixth lunar months each year when every Mongghul village performed a procession in their own village fields or territory. Participants included the field protector, the temple keeper, the village deity, and at least one male representative from each household.

In the evening, some villagers sat in the temple-keepers' rooms, others sat in the courtyard, but most sat or lay on the green grass outside the front gate where they chatted, smoked, and joked while waiting for Monk Nangsuu and a shaman to arrive. At about one AM on the nineteenth day, Monk Nangsuu arrived on his mule with his retinue.

Everyone became lively, offering incense, and performing prostrations both inside and outside the temple. Villagers brought a sheep into the center of the temple courtyard. The shaman poured water into the sheep's ears and the ewe immediately shook her head, which meant the female deities had already agreed to the death of this victim. The sheep was killed and offered to the deities. While this was going on, the shaman danced to the beat of a goatskin drum. Under his guidance, a stake representing the throne of the White Tiger God¹²⁹ was thrust into the ground in front of the temple gate and a black bowl was upturned on the roof of the gate.

At about five AM at the Mansion, a parade started eastwards to the sounds of the blaring ox horn and conch shell and the beating of the drum. Tughuan Nangsuu went first, mounted on his mule led by Rnqan and Niruu, who took turns holding the reins. The shaman followed, and behind him were the drummers, a man with a conch shell horn, and men holding a Buddhist parasol. A total of thirteen Buddhist flags were carried separately. About thirty men walked in a line between two of these flags. Some men also carried the 108 volumes of Buddhist scriptures and the two female deities. They wandered in a seemingly random way through the crowd, sometimes in front, sometimes at the end, and sometimes at the sides of the procession.

All the villagers, the shaman, and the two female deities circled the fields, which confirmed their village land boundary. Four

¹²⁹ The White Tiger God acts as an evil spirit when in the human world, but as a god when in Heaven. It is not worshipped in village temples or monasteries in Mongghul areas (told by Ma Ankui to Limusishiden on 10 January 2019).

men from Wuxi Village carried the two female deities, each in her own sedan. Every now and then, when they tired, other young men replaced them.

As they went through Wuxi Village territory, the team walked carefully so as not to trample the green crops. Resembling a snake slithering forward, the line twisted and turned in the crop-free spaces and at the intersections between fields, or walked along the edge of the fields. Arriving at a *suurishidi*¹³⁰ on top of the mountain behind the village, everyone stopped. A big fire was lit in front of the *suurishidi*. Juniper branches and roasted highland barley flour were put on the burning fire. Those attending began chanting the Six Sacred Syllables and prostrated three times in a northwesterly direction where hailstones commonly originated in summer.

The shaman was again dancing while beating his goatskin drum. The two female deities walked backward and forward furiously as all the villagers knelt. The shaman and female deities negotiated and finally reached an agreement. A black stake was thrust into the *suurishidi*, one black upturned bowl was buried near the black stake, paper banners were draped on the *suurishidi*, and another pit was dug nearby. After burying a black wooden hammer, a crow fixed to a stick, and a bow and arrow pointing northwest, the pit was filled. The parade then went around the *suurishidi* three times. On the third turn, the whole group stopped, faced northwest, howled three times, and then continued walking.

They had started off from the north side of Wuxi Village. After finishing the stake-burying rite, they walked down the south side. As they walked down from the mountains behind the village and neared Wuxi Village, all the villagers came out and knelt along the route of the procession. As Monk Nangsuu, the two female deities, and the

¹³⁰ According to the instructions of a living Buddha or deity, a *suurishidi* was built at the center of certain slopes to protect against hailstorms and disease. A pyramidal structure of adobe bricks or soil, it was usually about two meters high and about four meters diagonally across. It did not contain anything valuable and people did not circumambulate it. All villagers worked together to build the *suurishidi*.

men carrying the Buddhist scripture volumes walked nearer, the villagers began making three prostrations.

Arriving at the Wuxi River bank marking the boundary of Wuxi Village territory, their walk was completed. Next, they had to cross the river and walk up the steep mountains behind Tughuan Village. Before setting out, they rested on the riverbank and had a breakfast of brick tea and bread provided by Wuxi villagers.

By the time they had finished this simple meal, the sun had risen to about two poles high in the east. Lower Tughuan villagers now carried the two female deities because the procession would travel in their own village territory. They started off from the south side of their land. As the procession arrived, people from Lower Tughuan Village knelt to greet them. All villagers prostrated three times.

A local saying warned *Xjunna Tughuandi bii ghua, jigena Jangjadi bii dalidi*. 'Don't give your daughters to a wife in Tughuan Village, don't sell your donkeys in Jangja Village'.¹³¹ This suggested that the mountain behind Tughuan Village was very steep and high. As most fields were on the middle and upper slopes of the mountains Tughuan villagers suffered, having to walk up steep, high mountain paths to reach the distant mountain fields.

The procession slowed while climbing up the mountains. Everyone panted. They stopped now and then, rested a bit, and then proceeded. The men carrying the female deities' sedans were frequently replaced by other young men.

It was afternoon when they reached a pass at the top of the mountain where a *suurishidi* had been built. This was also a landmark between Lower and Upper Tughuan villages. A similar stake-thrusting rite was performed here. At this station, the villages took turns every three years to offer a sheep to the *suurishidi*. When

¹³¹ Today's Jangja Mongghul Village, Hongyazigou Township, Huzhu County. It neighbors Tughuan Village, and is located at the south side of Tughuan Village. The first Zhangjia Living Buddha, Zhabaese (?-1641), was born in the village.

they finished the rite, Monk Nangsuu announced, "OK, now please boil the mutton. Let's have a good rest while merrymaking."

The two female deities were placed on a large coarse cloth spread on the flat ground by the *suurishidi* facing northwest. Some people slaughtered the sheep, others boiled water in a pot; some were drinking while others began wrestling. Zanan, a big strong man, eventually emerged as the wrestling champion after defeating all his opponents. No men from the three villages had ever defeated him in the yearly wrestling bouts here on this mountaintop. He could hold two stone rollers in each hand at the same time and could hold an ox while threshing crops on the threshing field. His reputation traveled far. He was known as a man of great strength in Tughuan Village and beyond. Monk Nangsuu was proud that Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion had such a strong man.

A couple of hours later after the mutton had been eaten and the soup drunk, Monk Nangsuu declared it was time to move again.

The procession started off along Upper Tughuan Village's territory where the route led down the steep, high back mountain. Men from Upper Tughuan Village took over carrying the two female deities. Monk Nangsuu mounted his mule and others followed, zigzagging down the mountain beside the fields.

Once the ritual was completed, they returned to the temple. The shaman again danced and beat his drum while the audience knelt and prostrated three times to the two female deities. Following consultations with the two female deities, Monk Nangsuu and other local elders decided the next year's rules.¹³² For example, after this day, villagers were forbidden to quarrel and fight. This particularly applied to husbands and wives. It was taboo to herd livestock on the slopes in the fields, to construct or demolish houses, to log in village territory, and to sing sexually suggestive songs in the village. Every family had to go to the temple to light butter lamps to both the Big and Small Female deities, burn juniper branches, and prostrate three times, one family after another in turn. The main purpose of the rules

¹³² *Chin* 'village rules to protect crops from hailstones'.

was to encourage a bountiful harvest. After about three months, these village rules would be removed from Tughuan and Wuxi villages. The villagers then needn't worry anymore about hailstones.

The villagers strictly complied with the rules. They paid attention to their behavior and actions so as not to break the rules and incur a penalty. Breaking rules disturbed malignant spirits. Ferocious ghosts were turned loose and hailstones would fall. The offending person was punished with a beating from Nangsuu Mansion, fined a fixed amount of oil, incense sticks, and cash and also had to guard the two deities in tents outside the temple or sometimes on a village pass at the back of the mountain or on the banks of the Wuxi River. This was during the three critical months when the two deities protected the crops from hailstones.


Monk Nangsuu asked the villagers to give the tail and hind leg of the sacrificed sheep to the shaman as a reward, and a small part to each household participating in the ritual.

Before all the participants left, Monk Nangsuu declared, "Everyone notify your family members when you return home and tell them to strictly comply."

The ritual was now over and all the participants returned home.

14

NANGSUU MANSION'S DAUGHTER

 One early summer morning, an eye-catching colorful peony bloomed in the small garden at the center of Monk Nangsuu's personal courtyard. The garden was round and covered with smooth, white loess soil. Only one large, old peony grew there. It flourished with branches and leaves reaching beyond the round adobe garden plot. Mongghul love peonies and plant them in their courtyard gardens. Beautiful and colorful, they also represent wealth and happiness.

Monk Nangsuu couldn't say when the peony was planted, as it was already in the garden when he was a child. After he became Nangsuu and moved into the courtyard, he personally took care of it. In spring, as the weather warmed, he spread manure, and watered and weeded it. In winter, he burned the dry trunk to ash and covered the top with wheat straw to keep it warm until the peony emerged early the next year.

This summer morning, he gently held the blossom, enjoying everything about it. He thought, "Sometimes a person's life isn't as valuable as this peony. When a person dies, they will be gone forever with no chance to return. But the peony is different, returning year after year."

"Gunbudunzhu's¹³³ father, the water is ready. Please come wash your hair," Liuyansuu called from the upper floor of the courtyard.

Monk Nangsuu walked to the upper floor where Layinsuu had placed a wooden bucket of warm water. Liuyansuu poured the warm water in a low wooden basin and helped her husband wash his hair.

¹³³ Gunbudunzhu was Monk Nangsuu's son.

Niruu shaved the front of Monk Nangsuu's scalp and his stubble and then left. Liuyansuu was left to finish up, braiding his remaining hair into a pigtail. Monk Nangsuu sat on a stone on the edge of the upper floor while Liuyansuu, kneeling on one knee, combed and braided his hair.

"What do you think about Layinsuu and Jiraqog? I heard Layinsuu is with a young man, named Lasizisirang. He must be the son of the head of our mansion's Luxuu subjects. Lasizisirang once visited our mansion. Jiraqog joined Laxja on the second day of the second lunar month love song meeting in Wuuzin," Liuyansuu said while braiding Monk Nangsuu's hair.

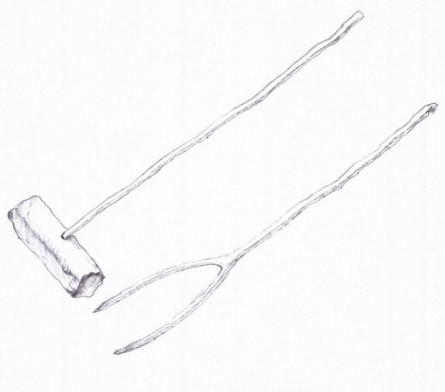
"Is this true? It's impossible!" exclaimed Monk Nangsuu replied, astonished.

"It must be true. Some days ago, I saw Layinsuu and Lasizisirang together in Rgulang Monastery. An embroidered tobacco bag was in his sash. I'm sure Layinsuu embroidered it and gave it to him. And once, late at night, I found Laxja and Jiraqog in the jail room holding hands," Liuyansuu calmly resumed.

"It sounds true then. Layinsuu is OK. She is Zanan's adopted daughter. It's easy to deal with this. Jiraqog and her mother have both been given shelter in our mansion. She's a good girl, polite and hard working. She loves the Mansion, too. But Laxja, despite growing up in our Mansion, is still a servant. His grandparents came here as servants seeking refuge and were allowed to stay. Laxja should behave as a servant in our Mansion. Jiraqog shouldn't be Laxja's future wife," replied Monk Nangsuu in an angry tone.

"I agree, and I have a plan to deal with it, but I don't know if you'll approve," Liuyansuu confided as she continued to braid.

"Please continue!" Monk Nangsuu urged.



"Zanan and his wife were childless. Layinsuu is now regarded as their own daughter. Mamadii and his wife are also childless. They've been married for more than ten years so they'll probably never have their own children. However, the second brother, Hgunqog, has four sons. We should call a family meeting and decide which of Hgunqog's sons should marry Layinsuu. As for Jiraqog, we will first ask her to become Mamadii's adopted daughter then later, as with Layinsuu, we'll ask one of Hgunqog's other sons to become her husband. Only in this way can we keep our family's noble blood pure. If we aren't careful, our descendants could become mixed," concluded Liuyansuu.

"I agree. It's impossible for Layinsuu and Lasizisirang to marry, although I like that gifted guy a lot. But we are noble and he is a commoner. There has never yet been a union between Nangsuu Mansion and commoners," declared Monk Nangsuu, praising his wife for her wise plan.

About an hour later, Liuyansuu sat in a chair, sipping buttered milk tea, waiting for Jiraqog's mother, Rnqanhua, to enter the room.

Shortly after, Rnqanhua entered wearing her Tughuan headdress.

"Sit here please, Rnqanhua," said Liuyansuu inviting her to sit beside her.

"No, no, this is fine. Standing here is good for me," replied Rnqanhua timidly, standing in front of Liuyansuu. Her accent had changed to Fulaan Nara dialect since making her life in Nangsuu Mansion and speaking only with Fulaan Nara people in her daily life.

"How's your life here? Do you like living in the Mansion?" Liuyansuu asked in a caring tone.

"Thank you very much for your concern, Aunt Nangsuu. I have a wonderful life here in your Mansion. I have enough food to eat and good clothes to wear. No one scolds or beats me when they are drunk. I enjoy my life. My daughter, Jiraqog, also enjoys her life. I'm so glad Jiraqog is growing up happily here in the Mansion,"

Rnqanhua answered, a satisfied smile on her face.

"I'm delighted to know you are enjoying your life in the Mansion. Please let me know if I can do anything for you," Liuyansuu resumed.

"I surely will. I don't have a problem coming to you if I need to," Rnqanhua answered firmly.

"Good. However, there is one thing we must discuss. Jiraqog has grown up. She's a nice, polite girl and a good field worker. Please ask her to wear the Tughuan headdress in the future," Liuyansuu said without expressing her real purpose immediately.

"Impossible! The Tughuan headdress is a symbol of power, for officials and nobles. Only Tughuan Village women have the right to wear it. Women from other areas who marry and move into their husband's home in Tughuan Village must wear it. We are only servants in your Mansion. How could it be possible for Jiraqog to wear the noble Tughuan headdress?" Rnqanhua asked in surprise.

"Monk Nangsuu and I have already decided Jiraqog's personal matters. She's a good daughter. We like her. We won't let Jiraqog marry and move out of the Mansion. You know that Mamadii and his wife are childless and need a child. Jiraqog is the best choice. Therefore, we want Jiraqog to become Mamadii and his wife's daughter. Do you agree?" asked Liuyansuu while sipping her tea.

"Great! I agree with your suggestion," Rnqanhua said nodding vigorously.

"Fine. Thank you for this assurance. Nangsuu Mansion will hold a rite for Jiraqog later," continued Liuyansuu with a smile.

Rnqanhua returned to her room, pleasantly surprised that Jiraqog would become a real member of Nangsuu Mansion, although she didn't fully understand what Jiraqog's future would be under the Mansion's arrangement. Jiraqog had fallen in love with Laxja. Did Nangsuu Mansion support this relationship? Thinking about all this gave her a headache.

Thanks to Monk Nangsuu's persuasion, Mamadii, Zanan, and Hgunqog and their wives finally agreed that Jiraqog would become a

member of Nangsuu Mansion by becoming the daughter of the childless couple, Mamadii and Srinsuu. After consulting Xuanglang Liuya Deity, a propitious day was chosen to perform a simple rite marking Jiraqog's formal acceptance into Nangsuu Mansion.

Early in the morning of the auspicious day, all Nangsuu Mansion members, wearing traditional clothes, gathered in front of the shrine rooms. A big sacrifice of juniper branches was lit and offered to Great Heaven and all the deities. Thirteen new steamed bread buns were offered on the table of Xuanglang Liuya Deity and Gunbuquxjang Tankari. In addition, three big butter lamps were lit before the deities.

Placing his joined hands in front of his forehead, Monk Nangsuu faced the deities and said, "Dear Xuanglang Liuya



Deity and Gunbuquxjang, we announce today that Jiraqog has become Mamadii and his wife's daughter and is now a member of Nangsuu Mansion. From now on, please take care of her as another dear person you protect."

Monk Nangsuu prostrated three times. Behind him in a line in

the shrine room were Zanan, Hgunqog, and Mamadii, who also prostrated in turn.


Outside in the courtyard, all the Mansion families stood in lines. Jiraqog and her mother stood in the middle of the front line wearing a set of new clothes. Monk Nangsuu and the three brothers came out and asked other families to prostrate facing the shrine.

A feast was held on the *pei*. Liuyansuu told Jiraqog to offer bowls of tea to her seated elders, one by one. Jiraqog first offered the tea to Monk Nangsuu and Liuyansuu, and then to Zanan. Jiraqog called Zanan "Big Father" and his wife, Wuxihua, "Big Mother,"¹³⁴ because she had been given to Mamadii and his wife, Srinsuu, as their own daughter. As Jiraqog offered a tea bowl to Mamadii, she changed her previous address "Uncle" to "Father" and Mamadii's wife from "Aunt" to "Mother." Jiraqog now called Layinsuu "Elder Sister." She was younger than Layinsuu and their relationship was now even closer and more intimate.

¹³⁴ Shge Aaba 'Big Father', refers to one's father's elder brother and Shge Aama 'Big Mother' refers to one's father's elder brother's wife.

15

VIOLATING CROP PROTECTION RULES

iraqog came in and reported to Monk Nangsuu that Grandfather Sairang and another man urgently wanted to see him. The two approached Monk Nangsuu saying, "Lord Nangsuu, what shall we do? Gindinsirang fought with his wife late last night. His neighbor heard her wails and Gindinsirang scolding her. We must deal with this serious affair during this critical period when the crops are ripening. We cannot even begin to imagine how our crops will suffer if nothing is done and this affair irritates Great Heaven and evil spirits."

Monk Nangsuu put his tea bowl down on a table, stood up immediately, and angrily shouted, "That terrible guy has dared to offend the crop protection rules! Go bring them here!"

Gindinsirang and his wife were brought to the jail rooms in Nangsuu Mansion where Monk Nangsuu sat in the trial chair. The couple stood before him. Gindinsirang was spiritless and his head was down. His wife's face was so swollen that her eyes had narrowed, making it hard for her to open them.

"Tell me why you fought! You know very well that during this time fighting is taboo. It may cause hail that will destroy our crops," Monk Nangsuu started.

Stone-faced, the couple remained silent.

"Hang them up!" Monk Nangsuu ordered.

Hearing this, the wife declared fearfully, "It's not my mistake. Last night, I returned from my parents' home and found my husband in bed with a young woman..." and then she burst into sad wails.

Her husband trembled after his wife gave this true account.

"Is that true Gindinsirang?" Monk Nangsuu asked.

Gindinsirang nodded confirming the accusation.

"Then take the wife back home and put Gindinsirang in jail to await punishment," ordered Monk Nangsuu. He didn't beat him immediately in order not to offend Great Heaven and the malignant spirits at this critical crop ripening time.

Gindinsirang's infraction had forced all the villagers to pay special attention each day to any weather changes. On the afternoon of the third day, ferocious black clouds rolled in rapidly from the northwest. Evil spirits were about to let loose avenging lightning bolts. Obviously, hailstorms would follow soon. Monk Nangsuu, the village elders, and all the local young men quickly gathered on the high soil platform near the village temple. Some waved Buddha banners while others beat drums and cymbals or blew conch shell horns. Both the Big and Small Female deities moved aggressively, sometimes walking forward, sometimes backward, and sometimes circling madly. A clacking sound came from between the pole and the iron rings of the sedans. The four men who carried the sedans moved madly and uncontrollably, following the deities.

People knelt on the ground and faced the northwest, piously chanting scriptures beseeching Great Heaven to have mercy and protect their crops by stopping the malicious-looking black clouds.

Peering out of the small jail room window, Gindinsirang saw darkness and flashes of lightning and heard booming. From the village temple, he heard the beating of drums and cymbals as well as the sound of conch shell horns blaring. He thought a hailstorm would come soon, damaging the crops. The villagers would then blame him for having beaten his wife during this precarious crop period. With tears rolling down his face he collapsed on the ground. He would surely be seriously punished by the villagers, even beaten to death if the crops were destroyed.

Soon, a shaft of light appeared on the northwest horizon. The thick, black clouds became thinner and thinner, and whiter and whiter. Finally, after scattering a little rain, the black clouds dispersed in all directions. The light increased until the sun shone again.

Hail had been avoided. Excited and proud that their performance had achieved victory, the villagers made three prostrations. Everyone cheered. They again consulted Big and Small Female deities about what they should do now. The answer was that, on the following day, Small Female Deity should go to the mountaintop behind Tughuan Village where, on a daily basis, she would guard the crops and block the malignant spirits until she thought the evil spirits would no longer strike the crops. Meanwhile, Big Female Deity would stay in the temple, protecting the villagers and their crops. People returned the two deities to their seats in the temple and happily returned to their homes.

Now that there was sunlight in the courtyard, Gindinsirang's heart calmed. The villagers and village deities had defeated the storm which he might have caused. He was confident his penalty would be reduced.


Laxja came in with a wooden bowl of highland barley noodles. Gindinsirang immediately stood. "You are lucky! If the storm had not been defeated this afternoon, Tughuan Nangsuu would have beaten you to death," cautioned Laxja.

"Thanks! I won't offend again. It's a great lesson," Gindinsirang pleaded.

In fact, only after Gindinsirang's wife had bribed Monk Nangsuu's mother, Srangsuu, with a brick of tea, some coarse cloth, and two loaves of baked bread, had Monk Nangsuu set Gindinsirang free, but with the stipulation that he had must go to the mountaintop to guard Small Female Deity in a tent. Every day he had to offer incense and light butter lamps to Small Female Deity, Great Heaven, and all the deities, and perform prostrations with other villagers until the deity declared that the crops were safe from storms. Only after about one more month would it be time to descend the mountain.

16

MONK NANGSUU MEETS
HIS SECOND WIFE

 Monk Nangsuu mounted his jujube-colored horse and galloped across the Maridang Hillside, a long rifle slung across his back. His retinue followed, bearing bows and arrows. Two hunting dogs ran energetically ahead of the troops, alongside them, and sometimes behind them. After passing through a long, narrow twisting valley, they climbed a mountain and finally reached the top where they dismounted and rested on a huge rock.

It was a sunny day with a cloudless blue sky. Monk Nangsuu surveyed the large, wide valley surrounded by high overlapping mountains and canyons with jagged rocks of grotesque shapes. Herding-tents sparsely dotted the mountainside and riverbank. It was perfectly peaceful, except for the faint sound of river water running at the bottom of the valley, meandering from north to south. Green grass was everywhere, except on the bare steep cliffs. Thick bushes spread themselves here and there. Pines and cypresses were green and luxuriant on the shady sides of the mountains. Flocks of sheep and herds of grazing yaks were sprinkled about on the green slopes.

What a magnificent landscape! Rubbing his thick stubble contentedly, Monk Nangsuu was enjoying this beautiful summer day when suddenly the two hunting dogs began barking. Monk Nangsuu saw many huge birds hovering in the sky. Now and again they appeared to swoop to snatch something from the ground. Down below he could see various-sized piles of stones circled by bushes and birches.

"Let's go, where those birds are hovering. There is surely

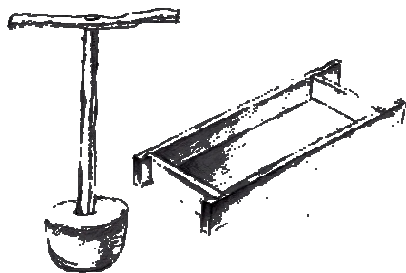
something down there," urged Monk Nangsuu.

Descending along a ridge, they reached the bottom of the valley. Shortly after crossing the river, they reached the stone piles. Monk Nangsuu, Rnqan, and Mamadii moved forward to investigate, while the others stayed back with their mounts and gear. As the three went quietly among the birches and bushes, they suddenly spied two wolves busily devouring a dead goat carcass. Vultures stood around, watching the wolves, waiting for their share. As the vultures moved closer, eager to snatch a piece of the carcass, the wolves turned on them, chasing them away. Very quietly Monk Nangsuu lay on the ground, rested his rifle barrel on a square stone, aimed at one wolf, and fired. Immediately, that wolf dropped onto the stones. The other wolf quickly disappeared and the vultures also flew off. Then the three men picked up the dead wolf, skinned it, and hung it on the back of Monk Nangsuu's horse. The vultures soon returned to feast on the wolf carcass.

The three men happily resumed their walk along a long gravel path on the slope where they soon encountered a large wetland covered by tall, thick grass. A narrow path cut through the wetland, extending far into the distance. They mounted their horses and went on, one hunting dog at the front, the other following behind.

Suddenly there was a flapping sound as several startled pheasants flew up. Mamadii took his bow and arrow from a long, narrow woolen quiver on his back, and shot. A pheasant fell to the grass. His second arrow quickly killed another. The two hunting dogs brought them back.

After carefully examining the two fat pheasants, Mamadii enthusiastically announced, "We will have a delicious supper



tonight!"

They weren't surprised by Mamadii's archery skill. Young men in Tughuan Village practiced martial arts with bows, arrows, and spears. Bodyguards were needed, particularly from Tughuan Village, when Tughuan Living Buddha traveled to Beijing, Mongolian areas, and other faraway places. Just a few years earlier, Mamadii had returned from Beijing and other areas in north China where he had been a bodyguard for Tughuan Living Buddha.

Continuing into the forest, Monk Nangsuu found a small trail that, based on his extensive hunting experience, he knew must be a musk deer trail because musk deer have a habit of making and following small beaten paths. He looked around carefully and found some tufts of musk deer hair on a small tree trunk, confirming his suspicions so he continued along the trail. Musk deer habitually rub against small trees as well as defecating daily at the same time of the day.

Monk Nangsuu, Mamadii, Rnqan, and the two hunting dogs lay hidden, waiting and watching for the deer while the others waited with the horses some distance away so as not to startle the game.

A long while later there was a rustling sound as some alert musk deer walked down the trail in a line. Monk Nangsuu calmed the dogs by rubbing their necks and watched as the musk deer came closer. He quietly aimed and shot. In the blink of an eye, the deer fled.

Mounting their horses, the men gave chase. Out of the forest, the herd of deer raced up a hillside. One struggled desperately behind the others. After climbing over a hill, only the lame musk deer was clearly visible in front of them. The others had already disappeared.

Monk Nangsuu whipped his jujube-colored horse to run faster, and shouted, "Chase it! Catch it! It's shot in the leg. It looks like a male deer. Catch it and get the precious musk gland as well as fresh, delicious meat for our supper tonight!"

They chased it over hill after hill. Still, the deer eventually disappeared. They looked here and there but did not find it. Then, at

the foot of a cliff, they noticed some small flat, low stone-walled rooms inside a fence of small, thin poles. A twig-knitted door was half open, guarded by an angry black dog. Sitting near the door, on green grass, an old granny turned her prayer wheel while reciting mantras. A small stream cascaded from the top of a high hill to the bottom of the valley before turning right between two narrow cliffs. Two white yaks and some sheep and goats grazed along the stream banks. Green grass and many colorful flowers were dotted here and there. The cliff behind inclined forward to such an extent it seemed it might collapse at any moment and smash the rooms to smithereens.

Monk Nangsuu and his retinue walked to the rooms. The black dog's furious barking frightened the two hunting dogs. They stood still. Hearing the dog barking, a pretty, plump young woman came out of the courtyard holding a stick in her right hand. Her colorfully-sleeved robe announced she was Mongghul. A coarse, white woolen sash hung loosely around her waist. Two ebony hair braids fell down her back. Two big eyes were embedded in her pretty face.

"Young woman, have you seen an injured musk deer?" Mamadii asked.

"You bad guys! Did you shoot a deer? Get out of this peaceful land!" the young woman shouted angrily. The granny closed her eyes and began loudly reciting scriptures, turning her prayer wheel even faster.

Monk Nangsuu was taken aback and embarrassed. It was getting dark so he ordered the others to pitch a tent on level ground.

Around midnight, Monk Nangsuu was still tossing and turning restlessly in his bed on the ground as the words shouted by the young woman echoed repeatedly in his ears. He had once been a monk, but later had left the monkhood and taken up the Nangsuu position in Tughuan Mansion. He understood that killing was a sin.

Suddenly, there was thunder and lightning, followed by heavy rain. The sounds of dogs' furious barking, yaks bellowing, sheep baaing, and the young woman's intense rebuke all mixed together.

Monk Nangsuu ran out of his tent to see floodwaters burst through the enclosing fence. Yaks, sheep, and goats were fleeing in panic in every direction. He ran to the barking dogs and found three wolves standing on the slope not far away, glaring covetously, their eyes shining strangely blue in the darkness of the night. Monk Nangsuu shot at them and they immediately disappeared into the boundless darkness.

Monk Nangsuu and his retinue helped the young woman bring the terrified livestock back inside the rickety fence.

The rain stopped. Everything calmed except for the swollen stream, where the water flowed rapidly.

Monk Nangsuu helped the young woman check the livestock one by one in the fenced yard. One lamb had been killed and one goat was lost. A musk deer huddled on the ground in a corner, its right leg bandaged with a piece of black cloth. Next to it was some bread and a wooden basin of water. As Monk Nangsuu approached, the panic-stricken deer's eyes widened. It tried to stand but failed. Monk Nangsuu turned and left straight away.

Monk Nangsuu and the young lady rested, both leaning against the stone walls in her room.

"It's my sin to have shot this musk deer," admitted Monk Nangsuu sadly.

"Stop hunting! Killing is a sin. Every living thing has its place on earth under Heaven. Musk deer never bother people so why do you interfere with them, and even kill them? My mother often gives bread and other food to this little herd of deer. They don't worry us and we treat them like our children. That's why this injured deer came here, seeking protection from your mad chase," concluded the young woman, looking at the low ceiling.

Monk Nangsuu remained silent for a long while. This pretty, kind-hearted Mongghul woman had shaken his emotions.

"Where are you from?" the young woman asked suddenly, breaking the silence.

"From Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion," Monk Nangsuu, replied,

hanging his head.

"I've heard of Tughuan Nangsuu. He is a high official in our Mongghul area, with much wealth, power, and a lot of farmland. You must be Nangsuu! Only wealthy, powerful men enjoy hunting in their leisure time, right?" inquired the young woman.

Monk Nangsuu rubbed his stubble and nodded, and a little later asked, "Tell me your name! Why do you live here?"

"My name is Sishihua. I live here with my family and herd. Several years ago, my father tumbled off a cliff and died, leaving my mother and me to manage our own lives. Life is harsh here as you can see by what happened tonight. Floods, heavy snow, and attacks by wild animals are common. In winter it is extremely cold in these mountain areas," Sishihua answered sadly and began sobbing.

"You should move out of this mountain area with your mother and make a life by plowing the earth," Monk Nangsuu suggested.

"How could that be possible? My family fled here from a conflict in the Xemeru area¹³⁵ many years ago. I have no relatives here and I have no money to buy farmland," lamented Sishihua.

Once again Monk Nangsuu fell silent as he considered Sishihua's blight, before suddenly bursting out, "Would you like to come and live in my Mansion? If you like, I'll come before the weather turns cold this coming winter. Please let me know. Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion can supply you and your mother with safety and warmth."

Sishihua continued sobbing as Monk Nangsuu drew her tightly to his bosom. He extinguished the butter lamp wick and deep in the night, under boundless Heaven, two hot hearts joined.

The next morning Monk Nangsuu returned to his Mansion, his heart fully satisfied.

¹³⁵ In today's Xidatan Township, Tianzhu County.

17

MONK NANGSUU'S SECOND WIFE

*B*ang!" the bowl fell from Liuyansuu's hands and broke into pieces. She was so angry she was speechless. Her body shook when she heard Monk Nangsuu would take a second wife. She pointed at him with her finger and declared, "If you truly bring that woman into the Mansion, I'll walk out the front gate."

Monk Nangsuu calmly explained, "Please listen. I have decided to take a second wife. You will remain the first wife and the house manager. Your position in the Mansion won't change. What's more, Mongghul men are allowed to have two or three wives if they can support them. I'm Nangsuu. My Mansion can support another woman."

"Hush! I strongly object to this unacceptable idea!" Liuyansuu roared.

Monk Nangsuu walked out slamming the door behind him. Loud wails rose from the room.

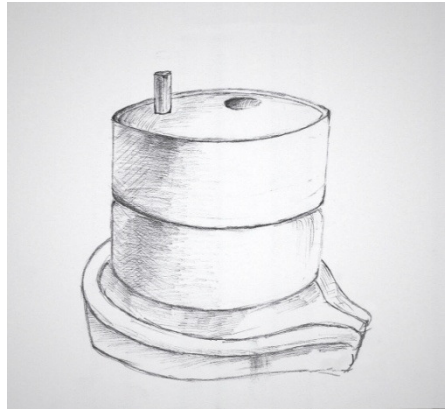
On the morning before Sishihua was brought to the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion, Liuyansuu had already left, headed to her parents' home in Wuxi Village, just opposite Tughuan Village. She took her son, Gunbudunzhu, and Tughuan Nangsuu's genealogy book with her.

Sishihua and her mother arrived in the lane on horseback at the head of an entourage. Niruu and Rnqan both held the horses' reins. In the traditional manner, Sishihua wore a brand new Tughuan headdress that had been made by Layinsuu and Jiraqog and her face was covered with a red cloth. Mamadii, Zhaxi, Aniruu, Yiila, and others drove Sishihua's yaks, sheep, goats, and dog. Her furniture and personal goods were loaded on the yaks.

This was a unique wedding. Usually, forty or fifty escorts on mounted horses enthusiastically accompanied the bride to her groom's home. However, no one from Sishihua's side escorted her except her old mother because she had no close relatives or clan members. No song or dance accompanied her arrival at the Mansion.

In accordance with traditional Mongghul custom, Monk Nangsuu warmly received Sishihua, helping her dismount onto a table placed under one of her stirrups. In front of the gate was another square table on which was placed a strip of silk, holy bread, milky water, and a box of wheat husks. An arrow was stuck amid the wheat husks, where there was also a bottle tied with a red cloth.

Together they walked toward the courtyard gate. A woman walked in front, holding a piece of white felt in front of the bride. In Nangsuu's courtyard, Sishihua and Monk Nangsuu faced the main room and prostrated three times. The first prostration was to Great Heaven, every deity, and the emperor. The second prostration was to the village deity image and the household Kitchen Goddess, while the third was to Nangsuu Mansion's grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers, elder brothers, and sisters-in-law, who were all older than Sishihua.



After the prostrations, the bride was led into the kitchen where a double-wicked lamp was lit in front of the Kitchen Goddess. The ritual of "opening the mouth" to call Monk Nangsuu's mother was held, signifying that from now on, the bride would call her mother-in-law "Mother." During this ritual, Sishihua sipped milk tea three times and, each time, she spat it out into a ladle and it was then poured onto the stove hearth. The mother-in-law held a rolling pin twined with red threads that she rolled up and down across

Sishihua's mouth three times while saying, "*Ghadaguni kudu bii kile, kuduguni ghada bii kile* Don't tell outside affairs to the family and do not repeat family affairs outside this home."

Once finished, she threw the rolling pin onto the roof and Sishihua was then taken to sit in the bridal chamber.


Monk Nangsuu's home was full of people. Tughuan Village villagers, clan members, relatives, and friends; Tughuan Living Buddha's representatives from Rgulang Monastery; representatives from each of the tribes in the Seven Valleys; and all Tughuan Nangsuu's subjects came to celebrate Monk Nangsuu's marriage. They brought gifts of butter, bread, liquor, white felts, pork, beef, and mutton.

A banquet was held in the long, wide Mansion passageway. Planks were lined up in the passageway to form tables and wheat straw was placed on the ground for seating. Burning ox dung warmed the teapots and earthenware jars of liquor. Bread and meat were piled on the plank tables to represent a mountain while liquor and tea represented an ocean.

People ate, drank, sang drinking songs, and joked with each other while children played happily. What a splendid feast! The guests ate an entire roasted sheep, and then wiped their oily faces with their hands, sleeves, and the uppers of their long cloth boots. Inevitably, such heavy drinking made guests quickly lose control. Within an hour some vomited, some peed in their pants, and as the liquor took firm hold, there was quarreling and fighting. Some guests burned their foxskin hats in the fire and some burned the edges of their robes.

18

MONK NANGSUU'S STORY

hen Liuyansuu saw her parents, she burst into tears and sat on the stone edge of the upper courtyard. "What's wrong with you?" her mother asked in surprise, guessing that her daughter must feel wronged.

Liuyansuu wailed more loudly and, while wiping her tears with her sleeve, replied, "Gunbudunzhu's father is marrying his second wife today. I can't bear it."

Her mother asked her to come in and sit. Liuyansuu's grandfather was there, turning his prayer beads in his hand. He was angry when he learned why Liuyansuu had fled from Nangsuu Mansion, and declared, "Bastard! I knew he wasn't a good man. In the beginning, I opposed Liuyansuu going to make her life with that brute in Nangsuu Mansion."

When he was about seven years old, Monk Nangsuu had been sent to live with his monk-uncle in Rgulang Monastery to become a monk. In the beginning, he was fine. He learned scriptures and did housework. His monk-uncle was satisfied. Years passed, he grew up and changed, becoming another person who no longer liked to read and memorize scriptures, do housework, listen to his uncle, or obey monastery rules.

He often left the monastery with his friend, another monk, Manlan, to fool around with women. The monastery elders had warned them several times, but it was useless. He continued behaving in the same way, committing various crimes.

One day, a small Buddha image disappeared from the monastery. Monk Nangsuu and Manlan were the key suspects. After discussion, the heads of the monastery agreed to punish the two by

expelling them from the Monastery and by forbidding them ever to be monks again.

In accordance with this decision, one night the monastery's monk-guards arrested and jailed Monk Nangsuu and Manlan. Early the next morning, several hundred monks gathered in the main scripture hall. The monastery heads and abbot attended. Monk Nangsuu and Manlan's hands were tied with rope behind their backs. Monk-guards watched them. A brazier, blazing with coal fire, was placed before them, and ominously, an iron rod with an attached small, round metal plate glowed red hot in the smoldering coals.

In this very solemn atmosphere, the abbot declared, "Now, on behalf of holy Rgulang Monastery and the living Buddhas and monks, as well as the people of the Seven Valleys, in order to respect and strengthen the dharma and Rgulang Monastery's rules, the Monastery has decided to drive away these two incompetent criminals, Ruuzhu¹³⁶ and Manlan, from this Monastery. After their foreheads are branded, they will be monks at any time in the future. They will easily be recognized as ex-monks expelled from a certain monastery after making critical mistakes. Apply the punishment immediately!"

The monk-guards put tall sharp triangular hats on the heads of the two criminal monks, smeared soot on their faces, and put a pair of glasses made out of twisted cotton on their faces to further humiliate them. Taking the red-hot iron rod from the brazier, a guard was about to brand Monk Ruuzhu when a shout came from some distance away. Everyone turned to see Tughuan Living Buddha running towards them. He announced, "I'm sorry to disturb you and the Monastery's laws and regulations. Ruuzhu is from my village - Tughuan. Don't brand their foreheads. Just expel them from the monastery as a penalty. Please!"

Given Tughuan Living Buddha's sovereignty, Ruuzhu and Manlan evaded the branding but were expelled from the Monastery. Ruuzhu then returned to Tughuan Village and replaced his old sick

¹³⁶ Monk Nangsuu's Mongghul name.

father to become Nangsuu in Tughuan Mansion.

Liuyansuu's grandfather said, "Everything reeks of sin. We committed a sin in the beginning by agreeing to this marriage.

Liuyansuu shouldn't have married into Nangsuu Mansion, thus becoming Monk Nangsuu's wife. Great Heaven has uncovered this sin. Originally, we were Nangsuu people from Tughuan Village. At that time, Monk Nangsuu's grandfather was in the Nangsuu position. We were driven from the Mansion after a conflict with Nangsuu and went to Wuxi Village, where we built our courtyard on Tughuan Nangsuu's farmland. Nangsuu




promised to build us a house, but then he demanded land tax. We were forced to become Tughuan Nangsuu subjects. Our position had been suddenly transformed from officials to commoners.

"Liuyansuu should never have become Monk Nangsuu's wife. She and Monk Nangsuu have a blood relationship. Their ancestors were from the same original home. We strongly opposed this marriage, but Monk Nangsuu forced us to agree. He threatened that if we wouldn't allow Liuyansuu to become his wife, he would take his land from us and then we would have had no land to make our lives. Reluctantly, we had no option but to agree. Great Heaven has noticed this and is ending this immoral marriage."

19

OFFERING TEA TO XUANGLANG LIUYA
AND GUNBUQUXJANG DEITIES

he annual tenth lunar month was an important, busy time for the Mansion. Monk Nangsuu and other key people in the Mansion didn't go on long journeys during this time. Instead, they held the Offering Tea to Xuanglang Liuya and Gunbuquxjang Deities Ritual in the Mansion. By performing this important ritual, all Tughuan subjects in the Seven Valleys were assured of good harvests, and people and livestock were kept safe and free from disease and misfortune. A pious person would have a good, happy life.

The time for performing this ritual coincided with the time Tughuan villagers were busy threshing their crops. However, all were required to stop and join the ritual in the Mansion and could only resume when the ritual was completed, which usually took seven to ten days, depending on Xuanglang Liuya Deity's instructions.

On the eighth day, Tughuan villagers and some subjects came to the Mansion to clean the courtyard and the monks' rooms. White felt was laid on the floor and then carpets were placed on the felt for the monks to sit on. Rectangular, low wooden tables were put in front of the carpets. The tables were for food, the monks' religious implements, and scriptures.

Men slaughtered hogs and sheep. Women steamed stuffed buns, prepared the meat, fried bread, and made noodles they cut into small triangular pieces, which they put to dry in the sun. Some women carried water from the river on their backs or shoulders.

That year, eight monks were invited to the Mansion on the ninth day of the tenth lunar month. Arriving on horseback in front of

the Mansion gate, the monks were received by Monk Nangsuu and the Mansion residents. Greeting each one personally, Monk Nangsuu offered each a strip of silk.

Big Female Deity was carried from the village temple into the shrine room in the Mansion.

The monks were invited into the monks' living rooms in the shrine courtyard and served tea, bread, butter, and toasted barley flour. After eating, the monks began busily making about ten dough effigies¹³⁷ from roasted highland barley flour. In addition, about ten similar dough effigies were made from dough and butter with a diameter of about three centimeters and a length of ten centimeters, and placed in front of Xuanglang Liuya, Gunbuquxjang, and Big Female deities. Dough effigies delighted the deities.



With Monk Nangsuu's help, a senior monk entered a shrine side room and carefully took out an old wooden box that had been placed there a full year earlier. Opening it revealed salt, pepper, sugar, ginger, garlic, dried bread, dried noodles, small pieces of gold and silver, and a dragon-patterned bowl. On the bowl's surface was a layer of yellow butter. When this was removed, the room was suffused with the fragrant smell of liquor from the bowl where a bit of liquor remained. Monk Nangsuu was delighted that the amount of liquor had decreased, signifying that Xuanglang Liuya and Gunbuquxjang Deities had drunk the liquor during the past year.

¹³⁷ *Shdirima* 'dough effigy'.

Nangsuu believed that the two deities were satisfied with the offerings of food, gold and silver, and fine liquor.

Villagers visited the Mansion one by one, bringing gifts of bread and butter lamps. Representative Nangsuu subjects from Luxuu, Shdangja,¹³⁸ Jilog, Niuqi,¹³⁹ Wughuang,¹⁴⁰ and Rdangyan came bringing gifts of butter, bricks of tea, mutton, pork, wheat, and highland barley to celebrate Nangsuu's annual ritual. They prayed for the safety of their clan's crops, people, and livestock during the coming year. They understood Xuanglang Liuya and Gunbuquxjang Deities were Tughuan Mansion's personal deities, and respected and worshipped them because these two deities also protected them. Subjects who encountered sufferings or difficulties came to Tughuan Mansion to consult Xuanglang Liuya Deity or invited it to their village where they asked it to help solve their own problems.

Lasizisirang came too, as a representative of Luxuu Clan subjects. He talked animatedly with Laxja in the passageway, as they held each other's hands. Jiraqog and Layinsuu brought in a big steamer of potato-stuffed buns and placed them before the seated, happy guests who gazed at these two men. Monk Nangsuu passed by and, seeing the two men, walked forward to greet Lasizisirang, and then addressed Laxja saying, "Please be sure to patrol the Mansion well these days, both day and night. It is easy to lose things while performing rituals. There are so many people in the Mansion. Safety is critical!"

"I'll do it, please don't worry! Lasizisirang has promised to patrol with me during these days," Laxja replied firmly.

Monk Nangsuu looked at Lasizisirang with satisfaction and then left.

Jiraqog and Layinsuu gave steamed buns to Laxja and Lasizisirang. They were so excited to see each other. It was really a rare opportunity to meet, particularly for Lasizisirang and Layinsuu.

¹³⁸ Today's Shdangja Village, Danma Town.

¹³⁹ Today's Niuqi Village, Hongyazigou Township.

¹⁴⁰ Today's Wughuang Village, Wushi Town.

The next morning, on the tenth day, the monks cleaned the wooden box that had been kept in the shrine room for one year. The butter that had been removed from the liquor-filled dragon bowl was melted once again, poured into a lamp, and lit before being offered to the deities. The other items - sugar, dried bread, and spices - were added to a big incense offering and burned. After cleaning the wooden box, the pieces of gold and silver were placed again on the bottom of the box and the dragon-pattern bowl was half-filled with newly distilled highland barley liquor. Melted butter was then poured on top of the fine liquor until the bowl was full. A bit later, the butter had solidified, protecting the liquor from spilling out or evaporating. Different sorts of bread were put around the bowl and various spices were sprinkled on the bread and bowl.

The gold and silver paid for the expenses of Xuanglang Liuya, Gunbuquxjang, and Big Female Deities in the coming year. The fine liquor was for the deities to drink, and the other items were food for the three deities. Once the wooden box was ready, the senior monk returned it to the seat of the shrine again. For the next year, it was strictly forbidden for anybody to enter the side room where the box was kept. The next year, a senior monk would again take it out and replace the old contents with new ones.

After the wooden box was returned to the shrine room, the monks began chanting such scriptures as *Shdangqa* which were prayers for the three deities, Xuanglang Liuya, Gunbuquxjang, and Big Female Deities, to protect the crops from hailstorms and drought, and to protect the people and livestock and keep them safe inside the Mansion and throughout all the Tughuan Nangsuu areas in the Seven Valleys.

As scriptures were chanted, people lit incense and butter lamps and prostrated before the three deities. Men were allowed into the shrine, but women were prohibited entry. Both men and women prostrated, but women did so outside the shrine. This lasted for three days until the afternoon of the twelfth day when the monks left on horseback.

All was quiet in the dead of night as Monk Nangsuu walked in the passageway toward his living courtyard with Rnqan. As he got closer to the Mansion front gate, he saw several people walking towards him, all hurly-burly and leading two horses.

"Who are you? What are you doing here so late at night?" shouted Monk Nangsuu.

They stopped. "It's us, Lord!" one answered.

From his voice, Monk Nangsuu guessed it was Niruu.

"When we returned to the village entrance after escorting the monks back to Rgulang Monastery, we saw two men sneaking out of the village, leading two horses. When they saw us, they tossed the reins away immediately and fled. We chased them but didn't catch them. Those two thieves vanished into the darkness. The front gate had been opened before we entered," continued Niruu.

"Are the horses in our Mansion? Where is Laxja tonight?" Monk Nangsuu asked.

"Yes, the horses are all here. We don't know Laxja's whereabouts."

Monk Nangsuu turned and walked directly into the jail courtyard, striding towards the jail room.

Laxja, Lasizisirang, Layinsuu, and Jiraqog were eating and drinking happily in the jail room. Both Laxja and Lasizisirang were a little drunk. Lasizisirang was holding Layinsuu around her waist with his right arm and Laxja had his hand on Jiraqog's shoulder. They were having a great time. Under the weak, twisted-cotton wick light, the two deeply-in-love couples expressed feelings of love, enjoying the freedom that came after the monks had left that afternoon. They would be busy again the next day because the Red Sect monks had been invited to continue another part of the ritual.

The jail courtyard door banged open followed by the sound of hurried footsteps. Frightened, the four lovers stood up. Jiraqog peered through the latticed window and saw Monk Nangsuu and another man walking towards them.

Laxja immediately told Layinsuu and Jiraqog to go quickly

into a cellar in a corner of the room. He then covered the opening with a wooden lid onto which he put a woolen bag full of peas. Only Laxja knew of this cellar in the Mansion. It had been dug by a criminal while he was imprisoned.

Laxja blew out the light.

Suddenly the door was kicked open. Although dark inside the room the powerful odor of liquor and burning tobacco hit Monk Nangsuu's nostrils.

"Laxja, what are you doing! Get up!" Monk Nangsuu shouted.

Rnqan lit the wick with tinder and flint.

Laxja and Lasizisirang stood unsteadily in a corner. The bed and floor were a mess. Four tea bowls were on a triangular table.

Monk Nangsuu walked up to Laxja, slapped his face, kicked him in the backside, and scolded, "Laxja, what did I tell you recently? Guard the Mansion well. But instead, you have been drinking and enjoying yourself! Meanwhile, the Mansion has been invaded by thieves! Two horses have been stolen! Get out of the Mansion if you don't like this job!"

Monk Nangsuu noticed the four tea bowls and carefully scanned the room. Not finding anyone, he went into the two other rooms, but still didn't locate the hidden women. He felt this was strange for he was sure two others were there.

After giving Lasizisirang a dark look, Monk Nangsuu left. He strode out of the jail courtyard and then turned right into his personal courtyard. Rnqan followed.

"Strange! There must have been two others, but I didn't find them. How odd," mused Monk Nangsuu.

Rnqan suggested, "It must be Layinsuu and Jiraqog. Lasizisirang and Layinsuu love each other."

"Probably," agreed Monk Nangsuu. "My first wife mentioned their relationship. Lasizisirang is my subject and cannot marry Layinsuu. Laxja is a servant in the Mansion. Servants are forbidden to marry women in Nangsuu Mansion. Layinsuu and Jiraqog have been recognized as the Mansion's daughters. Watch them and let me

know what happens. I'll deal with Layinsuu and Jiraqog's marriage later, at an appropriate time."

The next morning four invited Red Sect monks from nearby villages came to the Mansion. Their braids were wrapped around their heads and tied with red strings. Seated in the monk's room, they were entertained with tea, butter, bread, and roasted highland barley flour. After eating, they immediately made some small dough effigies and one big one about a half-meter high with a triangular base. The small effigies were offered to the deities, but not the big one, which was painted with red dye.

Once the dough effigies were done, they began chanting scriptures while villagers and subjects cleaned the butter lamps, made butter lamp wicks with cotton, and prostrated to the three deities. Women who had married and left Tughuan Village also visited the Mansion. They lit butter lamps, lit incense they had brought from their homes and made three prostrations toward the shrine. They were also served food and drink.

On the fifteenth day, a goat was killed and skinned, its intestines cleaned, and the meat boiled and offered to the three deities. The cleaned intestines and attached fatty tissues were twined around the big dough effigy. The goat meat was offered to all the deities.

At four in the afternoon on the fifteenth day, young village men dressed in long robes assembled to throw the dough effigies onto a site designated by the deity. The village men, holding six Buddhist flagpoles, walked out the front gate of the Mansion in a southerly direction towards the deity's designated site. The Red Sect monks followed, chanting, beating cymbals and drums, and blowing a horn. Others followed. Four Mongghul men held the big, dough effigy. Women were at the rear, maintaining some distance from the rest of the procession. The group proceeded to a field that belonged to the Mansion where a big straw pile had been made. The large effigy was placed on the straw pile, which was then set afire.

Flames rose from the straw, consuming the dough effigy.

While the Red Sect monks chanted scriptures around the fire, all the participants prostrated toward the smoldering fire and chanted. This ritual signified that all evils had been vanquished. After chanting, the assembled group turned and ran to the Mansion without looking back, in fear the evils would follow.


Burning the dough effigy signified the conclusion of the ritual. Monk Nangsuu, Tughuan villagers, and all the Nangsuu subjects believed that all evils and ghosts had been collected and burned in the big fire. Nangsuu Mansion, all Tughuan villagers, and all subjects in the different areas of the Seven Valleys under Tughuan Nangsuu jurisdiction would now enjoy safety and peace.

After returning, Monk Nangsuu distributed sugar, jujubes, and small pieces of baked dough, all considered to be gifts from the deities. They were tossed into the air. People scrambled for these gifts and ate them immediately. After eating a meal, the Red Sect monks returned to their homes with gifts from Nangsuu Mansion. Now that the ritual was concluded, the guests began leaving. Big Female Deity was carried back to the village temple. Some whose homes were far away stayed overnight and left the following day.

Tughuan villagers resumed their threshing work.

20

PUNISHING LIUYANSUU'S FAMILY

t was dim under the half-moonlight. Four men carried Xuanglang Liuya Deity in her sedan on their shoulders down a passageway and placed it near a big pile of smoldering incense on the *rdunbin* in the Mansion. Standing by his deity, his hands clenching and unclenching his sleeves, Monk Nangsuu asked, "Dear Lady Sovereign, I must consult you about another serious problem. Hopefully, we will deal with it quickly and successfully! I have sent men to Liuyansuu's home to ask her to return to the Mansion with my son, Gunbudunzhu, and the Nangsuu genealogy book. She is full of remorse and would like to return, but her family and clan members haven't given permission. They also didn't come to the Mansion last year to pay their land tax and also haven't come to offer tea to you and Gunbuquxjang Deity, nor bring gifts as before. They want to end their relationship with the Mansion and no longer be our subjects. What should we do?"

Xuanglang Liuya Deity was still. Regardless of what Monk Nangsuu asked, the deity remained still or walked backward, signifying a negative answer or that she didn't know.

At this time, Zanan walked towards the deity and asked, "Is there an avenging rite to perform?"

Suddenly the sedan walked forward quickly, signifying agreement.

"When should we perform this rite? This month?" continued Zanan.

The sedan walked backward.

"Within a week?"

The sedan walked forward.

"Tonight, immediately?"

A negative response was signified as the deity walked backward.

"Tomorrow night?"

Again, a negative answer was given.

"What about the day after tomorrow?"

The sedan walked forward.

Monk Nangsuu asked, "In the daytime?"

The answer was negative.

"In the evening?"

The sedan quickly walked forward.

"Should we invite your spirit medium to assist you in this important rite," Monk Nangsuu asked. Based on his experience, if Xuanglang Liuya Deity didn't reply quickly, it meant she needed her spirit medium to help her.

The sedan walked rapidly forward.

Monk Nangsuu and Zanan continued, "What shall we prepare for this coming avenging rite? Animal heads?"

The sedan walked backward.

"A black bowl, pot, earthenware, or plow head?"

The answer was negative.

"Weapons?"

The answer was positive.

"A kitchen knife or dagger?"

The sedan walked backward.

"An arrow?"

The sedan walked rapidly forward.

"Is there anything more?"

The reply was positive.

"A helmet?" Zanan asked confidently, based on his former experience.

Xuanglang Liuya Deity walked forward.

"Anything more?"

The sedan gave a negative response.

Xuanglang Liuya Deity was carried back in her sedan into the shrine. Monk Nangsuu, Zanan, and the others were glad to learn this information from their Mansion deity and thought it must be the usual "burying arrow and helmet" rite to seriously damage Liuyansuu's family and clan. Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion was determined that Liuyansuu, her family, and her clan pay a heavy price for leaving their master and taking Monk Nangsuu's only son and the Mansion's most important possession - the genealogy book.

At sunset, as designated by the deity, the spirit medium was invited to the Mansion. A middle-aged man with a big growth near his right eye, he wore a splendid long-sleeved, green gown slit into several sections below the waist. These sections flared out when he danced. Three small green, yellow, and red flags were fixed to his back. He also wore a helmet with small bells and long boots and carried a sword, a bow, and three arrows on his back. He was dressed like a warrior. His home was in Xuangwa¹⁴¹ Village, in the Fulaan Nara area and he had a wife and children. His usual life was no different from that of the common people and included work for both the farm and house. Xuanglang Liuya Deity had invited him to assist her once before at the Mansion.



The spirit medium was served noodles and meat, and then he asked to rest until it was thought that most of the villagers had gone to bed. After washing their hands, four men carried Xuanglang Liuya Deity on their shoulders. According to the deity's instructions, Monk Nangsuu and several other men followed the deity with a helmet and

¹⁴¹ Today's Xuangwa Village, Wushi Town.

an arrow that had been smeared black with ash from the kitchen hearth.

Carrying Xuanglang Liuya Deity, the men walked out the front gate of the Mansion, turned left, and walked to the entrance of the village. They then walked across the Wuxi River on a log that formed a simple bridge. The deity suddenly stopped on the sand and stone platform on the river bank and began walking forward and backward, and sometimes circling. Eventually, the deity walked closer to the spirit medium and one of the sedan poles struck the spirit medium's left shoulder. The spirit medium immediately realized that he was being asked to dance.

After prostrating three times to Xuanglang Liuya Deity, he began shaking his head, making the small bells ring. As he became more excited, he danced furiously, working himself into a frenzy. After performing with his sword, he shot his three arrows into the air aiming them toward Liuyansuu's family.

He stamped on a spot and shouted, "This is the site. Dig here!" and continued brandishing his sword and dancing.

Men started digging and asked, "How deep should we dig?"

"Half a spade handle's length!" the spirit medium bellowed.

When the hole was the right depth, Hgunqog asked, "Shall we put the arrow or helmet at the bottom of the hole first?"

The spirit medium shouted, "Arrow first!" while shaking his head.

"In which direction should the arrowhead point?" Hgunqog asked while placing the arrow in the hole.

The spirit medium again madly danced. His sword pointed toward Liuyansuu parents' home.

"Shall we put the helmet on the top of the arrow?" Hgunqog asked after placing the arrow in the designated direction.

The spirit medium thrust his sword three times inside the hole and exclaimed, "Yes!"

The helmet was then pressed on top of the arrow.

"What next? Shall we fill the hole?" continued Hgunqog.

The spirit medium waved his sword clockwise three times and then counterclockwise three times above the hole, and shouted, "Bury everything immediately! The quicker the better!"

Filling the hole quickly and firmly, the people asked the spirit medium, "What shall we do next?"

The spirit medium danced crazily, jumping up and down on top of the hole, waving his sword, "Pile stones on top of the hole!"

Men quickly collected stones surrounding the burial site and piled them on top of the pit.

At this moment, Xuanglang Liuya Deity began moving madly, walking forward and then turning left and right every now and then, sometimes walking backward and then turning left or right again. Finally, she circled the spirit medium who was madly dancing and waving his sword, while circling the stone pile.

During this critical time, Monk Nangsuu asked, "Is there something more, or have we done everything?"

The spirit medium immediately replied, "Everything's been done. The arrow will continue to send evil to the Wuxi subject families. Now you all must have faith. Within the next two years, some strong young men among the Wuxi subjects will die. The Wuxi clan will collapse soon!"


The spirit medium stopped dancing and again became a normal man. He put his sword on the ground, faced Xuanglang Liuya Deity, and prostrated three times. Sweat dripped from his face and he appeared very tired.

Everyone returned to the Mansion. They sat on the *pei*, discussed the rite, drank tea, and waited for information of their "victory" that would surely come soon from Liuyansuu's family.

The next morning, the spirited medium left with a reward of bread, cash, and brick tea.

21

MONK NANGSUU AT THE RGULANG
MONASTERY RELIGIOUS DANCE

ounted on his fine mule and accompanied by Rnqan and Niruu, Monk Nangsuu reached the entrance of Rgulang Monastery. He had been invited to attend the annual religious mask dance held on the eighth day of the sixth lunar month. It was the monastery's biggest summer religious event. To honor and pay respect at this important time, the monastery had invited Monk Nangsuu and the other tribal heads in the Seven Valleys to attend.

Several monks were waiting for their arrival at the entrance of the valley where the monastery was located. One monk walked forward and presented a white strip of silk to Monk Nangsuu, and then ceremoniously led them to the monastery.

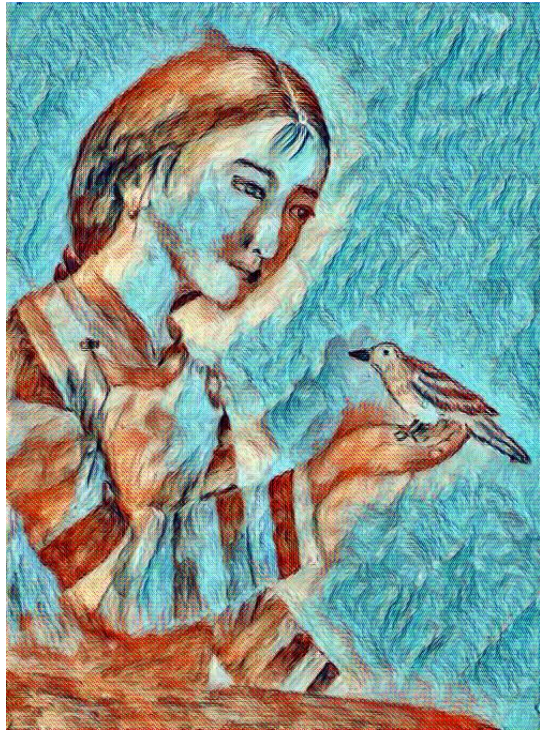
Crowds strolled to the monastery. Some were mounted and some were on foot. They all wore their most impressive clothes. Slowly moving forward among the crowd, young people looked around every now and then, hoping to locate a former, current, or future lover, a major attraction of every big gathering. Everyone wore a happy, confident smile.

Arriving at the Great Scripture Hall, Monk Nangsuu dismounted. Monk guards made a narrow passage through the crowd and led Monk Nangsuu to his seat. After passing through the big, wooden carved front gate and going up several sets of wooden stairs, they arrived at a large, level square enclosed by walls. Built on a platform, the main Assembly Hall featured golden, spectacular roofs. Under the morning sunshine, the reflected light was dazzling. Flocks of pigeons landed on the roof, cooing and chasing each other, and

then flying away. Below the platform, a sandalwood tree grew on the left side of the wooden stairs. A pine tree was on the right. Monk dancers were gathered and ready to perform.

Monk Nangsuu was invited to sit in an important seat in the upper courtyard with the other tribal heads. Zhuashidi Nangsuu and Xewarishidi Nangsuu were seated on either side of Monk Nangsuu. They were again welcomed with ceremonial strips of silk and served tea, bread, butter, highland barley roasted flour, mutton, and fruit. Monk Nangsuu happily talked with the other two *nangsuu* and other tribal heads. Occasionally they teased each other and made jokes, which brought bursts of laughter from time to time.

"How are you Uncle Tughuan Nangsuu? We haven't seen each other for one year - not since the same day last year," enquired Xewarishidi Nangsuu, a Mongghul. He wore a black felt hat, a long silk-fabric robe, and a pair of glasses that featured large round lenses of dark crystal.



Monk Nangsuu shook his head, and replied, "Not so good. You already know that my Darima Clan subjects have split and recently my Wuxi subjects have also decided to leave. Everything else is fine. Only the subjects are a problem. They want to be independent. What a headache!"

"Yes, I agree. I have faced similar problems. My Huarin

subjects have tried to leave and with that aim, they have lodged a lawsuit with the Wuxu government.¹⁴² It's not finished yet, but it looks like I won't be able to keep them," replied Xewarishidi Nangsuu, shaking his head.

At the sound of a prolonged blare from a long trumpet, Tughuan Living Buddha arrived in the square accompanied by mask dancers, and then was politely led to sit on his throne. Monks began performing a sacrifice ceremony at the center of the square as people offered ceremonial strips of silk, fruit, and bread. After this preliminary ceremony, the mask dance began. Four skull-masked monks began slowly dancing to the rhythm of drum beats.

While enjoying the music and dance, Monk Nangsuu asked Zhuashidi Nangsuu, "How have you been this past year, Uncle Nangsuu?"

Zhuashidi Nangsuu was Tibetan. He wore a blue round hat and a new satin gown. "Uncle Tughuan Nangsuu, I bought twenty-five *sheng* of fields in the Haliqi Gugun¹⁴³ area and recruited some new subjects to work on these new fields. This is the biggest news for us in the past year."

"Congratulations! Your subjects are increasing while mine are decreasing. What a difference!" groaned Monk Nangsuu.

"Please don't complain. Wasn't there a happy event at your Mansion?" Zhuashidi Nangsuu asked with a smile.

"What's that? I don't know anything," Monk Nangsuu replied in surprise.

"Have you forgotten? You have acquired a beautiful young wife, right? You are so forgetful! But you are such a skillful hunter!" Zhuashidi Nangsuu guffawed.

His joke caused all the tribal heads to burst out laughing.

"You brought your young wife and her old mother to your Mansion. Will you ask her mother to be your wife too?" teased Xewarishidi Nangsuu.

¹⁴² *Yamen* 'government office' during pre-liberation times.

¹⁴³ In today's Gugun Village, Danma Town.

All the tribal heads looked at Tughuan Nangsuu and laughed again.

Tughuan Nangsuu blushed and replied, "I can marry an old granny.¹⁴⁴ Can't all of you do the same?"

"We absolutely can't. Only you can do it this way in the Seven Valleys," teased Zhuashidi Nangsuu.

"Ha...ha!" they all laughed together.

"Most men favor black pubic-haired flesh, but our dear Uncle Tughuan Nangsuu prefers white pubic-haired flesh. Ha...ha!" said another tribal head, making more fun.

"I'm very fond of the color white, so that's why I prefer white pubic-haired flesh," Monk Nangsuu returned.

"No, that's not true! Uncle Tughuan Nangsuu believes white pubic-haired flesh is softer and tastier," another teased.

"You're all wrong. White pubic-haired flesh is so precious that Uncle Tughuan Nangsuu doesn't eat it, but offers it on the table of his shrine and worships it," Xewarishidi Nangsuu returned.

"I not only worship the pubic-haired flesh on the table, but also lick it every day for the taste," Monk Nangsuu said, and joined in the laughter this caused.

The tribal heads and the surrounding crowd all burst out laughing.

"What a great man you are! You not only appreciate your granny's pubic-haired flesh, but you also lick it every day. You make full use of everything. What a great man! Your granny must be the happiest woman in the world. You must be the happiest man under Heaven. We should study and learn from your wisdom," another tribal head teased.

All the heads continued teasing Tughuan Nangsuu who blushed and stopped replying to their jokes.

All of a sudden, the sound of blaring horns, beating drums, and clanging cymbals, echoed in Rgulang Valley. Monks dressed in

¹⁴⁴ Monk Nangsuu's second wife's mother. Men enjoyed teasing each other by making jokes once they gathered together.

various costumes began dancing in circles in the center of the square. The faithful attendees from the surrounding Mongghul areas made prostrations to the circling dance group.

Suddenly, an old monk pointed at Tughuan Nangsuu and said stealthily to the young monk on his side, "Do you see that man sitting in the middle of the guests? That's Tughuan Nangsuu. He was once a monk here in this monastery. Later, he broke the monastery's rules by doing many immoral things. Eventually, the monastery expelled him and another young monk, Manlan. In the morning before they left, all the monks gathered to enforce the penalty of branding their foreheads so that they would never again become monks in any place or in any monastery. But, at that moment, Tughuan Living Buddha came and stopped them from branding the disgraced monks. Still, those two were driven out of the monastery. That guy was then assigned to be Nangsuu in Tughuan Mansion since Tughuan Living Buddha was from the same village. Life has changed very much for him. He now sits in an important seat among very important guests during meetings and festivals at holy Rgulang Monastery."


Monk Nangsuu overheard the two monks and it deeply pricked his inner heart. He immediately felt private grief. A series of scenes from his life as a young monk flashed through his mind like a draft of cold wind. He felt embarrassed.

Before the masked dance had finished, he left, saying he had to urinate.

22

LIUYANSUU'S RELATIVES

CURSE THE MANSION

 *rdunbin* had been built on the banks of the Wuxi River by Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion to injure the family of Liuyansuu's parents. It had been effective. Over two years, four strong young men had died mysteriously one after the other. One was Liuyansuu's brother, and the others were her clan members. This caused great panic among Liuyansuu's relatives. All Wuxi Village elders supported Liuyansuu's parents' clan and worked together to help the clan return the curse to Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion.

Wuxi Village elders hated Monk Nangsuu because he had married Liuyansuu with whom he shared a close blood relationship. In addition, Tughuan Nangsuu had punished them, driving them out of the Mansion after a serious conflict with Monk Nangsuu's grandfather, who held the Nangsuu position at that time. They were forced to become Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion's subjects and pay an annual land tax. Furthermore, since Liuyansuu had fled to her parents' home with her son and the genealogy book, the Mansion had sought revenge, directing evils towards Liuyansuu's clan by performing rituals that had caused the deaths of four young men.

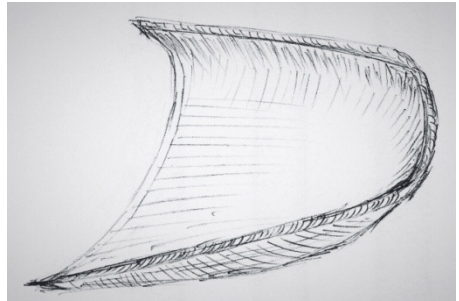
One night, some Wuxi Village elders went to the village temple to consult Big Female Deity. As four men carried her into the temple courtyard, one elder criticized Big Female Deity¹⁴⁵ directly,

¹⁴⁵ Big Female Deity was believed in and worshipped by Tughuan and Wuxi villagers. If all the villagers begged her for something, then she helped them all. If just one family or clan begged for help, then she helped only that family. She also helped one family curse another family in the same clan.

"What are you doing, dear Big Liuya Deity? Where have you gone? Don't you know four young men have died in Wuxi Village? Please tell us now what caused this and how to deal with this. It's hard to imagine what further calamities might befall us."

Big Female Deity quickly communicated, "To block the evils, a *binkang*¹⁴⁶ must be built in front of Wuxi Village as soon as possible. Details about the specific location will be given once the construction materials have been prepared."

Wuxi villagers soon began molding 100,000 *sasa*¹⁴⁷ under a monk's instruction. Meanwhile, other villagers made mud bricks. Carpenters were invited to build the frame of the rectangular temple for the *binkang*, which had no doors - only a square hole on each side for the windows.



Once everything was ready, the elders went again to the village temple and reported to Big Female Deity, who communicated that two Red Sect and five Yellow Sect monks should come to the village very late the following night. They would be informed of the exact time to build the *binkang* when Big Female Deity arrived.

It was deadly still and very peaceful in Wuxi Village the next night. Everyone seemed to have fallen asleep. Even the village dogs were silent. Big Female Deity was carried into Wuxi Village. When

¹⁴⁶ *Binkang* are structures built at crossroads, at the center of villages, on hillsides, between villages, beside springs, and near temples. They are made of adobe bricks and are in the form of a square pavilion surrounded by many pillars. There are two big holes on the front and back walls. The whole village cooperates to build it under a deity's guidance. Each pavilion is said to contain 100,000 clay Buddha images. *Binkang* prevent hailstorms and disease, and maintain peace in the surrounding area. Elders circumambulate *binkang*, praying and chanting, on the first and fifteenth days of every lunar month (Limusishiden 2014:57).

¹⁴⁷ *Sasa*, small flat rectangular Buddha images made with red clay.

the procession came to a crossroad in front of the village, the deity indicated that they should stop.

"Dear Big Liuya Deity, is this the site for the *binkang*?" an elder asked.

The sedan deity moved forward immediately, "Yes."

"Shall we start building now?"

The sedan deity again walked forward.

After clear directions from the deity, they kept a big fire burning the whole night to light up the digging site. People prostrated to Big Female Deity in all directions. The villagers dug a pit. The two Red Sect monks, barefoot and wearing their red robes and a piece of red cloth around their heads, descended into the pit to bury mysterious items that no one understood except the two monks. In the darkness, no one could clearly see what items were being buried. Only the two Red Sect monks knew what was needed and their meaning.

Meanwhile, the five Yellow Sect monks circumambulated the pit in a counterclockwise direction, waving Buddhist flags, beating drums, blowing a conch shell horn, and throwing stones and sand, while also howling and cursing in the direction of the evils, towards Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion.

A while later, when the pit was filled with soil, a stake on which mysterious characters in Tibetan had been written with red earth was thrust into it. Two Red Sect monks had circled it with the blood of a white rooster. The stake would block evils and protect Liuyansuu's family and her clan.

When dawn broke, two carpenters with the assistance of some village men erected the consecrated frame of the wooden structure above the pit. Using mud bricks, the Yellow Sect monks started to build a wall about 1.7 meters high inside the frame, with the stake in the center. Then a large incense burner was lit, pounded pine cones and cypress leaves were spread on the ground, and the monks paved the floor with the *sasa* that had been smoked beforehand. This was followed by a new layer of pounded cypress and *sasa*, and so on until

the 100,000 *sasa* had been placed in layers inside the building.

After the walls were built, the monks blessed it by sprinkling ritual water steeped in cypress twigs. Rice and wheat seeds were also thrown on the walls, and then stored inside the *binkang*. Next, the roof was placed on the structure. Around the *binkang*, a veranda was constructed and eight prayer wheels were built. In front of the *binkang*, an altar was built for offering incense.

After everything was finished, the monks again circumambulated the newly built *binkang* three times in a counterclockwise direction while chanting scriptures. At the same time, the villagers prostrated and chanted scriptures.

The *binkang* was complete. Big Female Deity was returned to her temple. All the monks left, each with gifts of brick tea, two baked loaves of bread, and coins given by Liuyansuu's clan.

The *binkang* on the crossroad in front of Wuxi Village successfully blocked the evils continuously sent by the *rdunbin* built by Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. Liuyansuu's family and her clan members in Wuxi Village again enjoyed peace and felt safe.

However, Liuyansuu was hugely humiliated and regretted fleeing rashly to her parents' home. Eventually, she decided to leave and seek another life with her son, Gunbudunzhu, in some place far away. Her flight from her husband's home to her parents' home had caused Monk Nangsuu's home to inflict a great catastrophe in the form of the deaths of four young men from her clan, one of whom was her own brother. The curses and evils directed at them as a result of Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion's revenge had caused these deaths.

Early one morning, Liuyansuu left her parents' home walking in the direction of Jiloghuali, with Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion's "treasures" - Monk Nangsuu's only son, Gunbudunzhu, and the Mansion's genealogy book. Liuyansuu had heard that Jiloghuali had many forests, big rivers, few people and a bit of cultivated land. It was a place where criminals and gamblers gathered.

Those giving chase gave up after those they were pursuing

crossed the Daban Mountains.¹⁴⁸ The mountains were covered with forests, so it was hard to find people. Gold was mined there and many from Liuyansuu's homeplace went there, dreaming of becoming rich by finding gold along the banks of the Jilo River. Liuyansuu hoped she and her son would surely have better lives there living among some acquaintances. But she also knew that she and her son would confront serious challenges on their journey, and again regretted having rashly left Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion, an act that had changed her status from noblewoman to beggar.

...

Decades later, a carpenter from the Xemeru area came to do house construction work in Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. Some Mansion descendants learned that the carpenter had lived in the same area as Liuyansuu and Gunbudunzhu and had once done some work in Liuyansuu's home. By that time, Liuyansuu had died, and Gunbudunzhu was already very old. He lived with his son and grandsons, cultivating fields and herding livestock. Gunbudunzhu had told the carpenter about his and his mother's life once he learned that the carpenter often worked in Liuyansuu's parents' home area.

The carpenter told some Nangsuu Mansion descendants that the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion's genealogy book was still in Gunbudunzhu's home. Hearing this news, two educated men who were descendants from Nangsuu Mansion went there to buy it back. When they eventually arrived, they found that Gunbudunzhu had died earlier and the genealogy book had been sold cheaply to a merchant. Gunbudunzhu's descendants had thought it was of little value to them. The two men returned empty-handed.

¹⁴⁸ The Daban Mountains were a landmark between Jiloghuali 'Back Mountain' and Front Mountain. Except for today's Jiading Town and Bazha Tibetan Township, the remaining areas were included in Front Mountain areas in Huzhu County. Back Mountain was regarded as a pastoral area while Front Mountain was an agricultural area.

23

LAYINSUU AND LASIZISIRANG



he day was coming to an end. Layinsuu and Jiraqog embroidered and chatted under a dim twisted-wick lamp of sesame oil. To their surprise, a melodious love song wafted through the window from the banks of the Wuxi River:

Chileb szarishdi ayili luan,	Many villages at the foot of the Chileb Mountains,
Ayili tura rmaa luanna.	Households in a village.
Deeran bulangdi rmaawa,	Inside square households,
Sgili turagu kun sojiwa.	My lover is there.

The love song resounded through the Wuxi Valley for a long time, intruding on the stillness of the night. From the melody and familiar voice, Layinsuu knew it was Lasizisirang and immediately understood what the song alluded to.

"It must be Lasizisirang. What should I do? He has come to see me tonight," Layinsuu said. Her heart pounded, but she was also afraid of leaving the Mansion to meet him.

"Don't be afraid! Go visit him. He came such a long way to see you. I'll lie to the night guards if they come to inspect," counseled Jiraqog.

Layinsuu walked from her room to the Mansion front gate, which had been bolted. She called to the gate guard patrolling the Mansion wall.

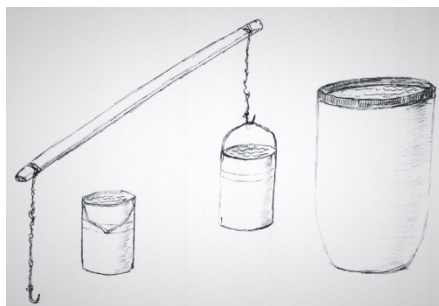
"Please open the gate. I must leave the Mansion for something

urgent," commanded Layinsuu.

"No! If Monk Nangsuu learns of this, I'll be seriously punished. There is a strict rule that no one is allowed to go outside without the permission of Monk Nangsuu or his nephews," replied the gate guard.

Taking out two copper coins, Layinsuu placed them in the guard's hands. The gate opened. As Layinsuu was leaving, she said, "Please open the gate before dawn breaks," and then left hurriedly.

A shadow and a horse lurked behind a big tree some distance away in the lane leading to the Mansion's front gate. Layinsuu was on horseback. Lasizisirang leaped onto the horse behind Layinsuu and the horse galloped away. Soon the two disappeared into the vast darkness.



Monk Nangsuu was about to go to bed when there was a knock on the door. Rnqan entered and reported, "Uncle Nangsuu, we didn't see Layinsuu this evening."

"Where has this girl gone? Go inform her father, Zanan. Let me know when there is any news about her," Monk Nangsuu ordered.

Rnqan left quickly and walked to Zanan's living quarters.

"What! Strange! Where has she gone this evening? Did you ask Jiraqog? She and Layinsuu share a room," Zanan said angrily.

"Yes, we asked, but Jiraqog said she didn't know," Rnqan replied.

"Liar. She must know. It's difficult to control her now that she's grown up. Take the others and go find Layinsuu!" Zanan ordered, and then he scolded his wife, Wuxihua, for not controlling her daughter.

The Mansion was searched. Men looked in every corner, in the stable, on the roof, in the storehouse, straw pile, cellars, and every place they could think of, but there was no trace of her. Rnqan and Niruu reported their lack of success to Zanan.

"Tell the front gate guard to come here," Zanan ordered.

The gate guard fearfully came in.

"Do you know where Layinsuu has gone? Did she ask you to open the gate tonight?" demanded Zanan.

"Sorry, I'm sorry! It's my fault! Layinsuu did indeed leave the Mansion this evening. I opened the gate after she begged me to," confessed the trembling guard.

"Who authorized you to open the gate?" Zanan scolded, while slapping and kicking him.

"Where has she gone? Didn't she tell you?" Zanan demanded.

"I don't know. She didn't say, but she told me she would return before dawn tomorrow morning," the guard stammered.

"Quickly go search for her outside," Zanan ordered.

Mansion men went searching along the riverbank and among the woods, shouting Layinsuu's name.

Meanwhile, after some time galloping along the riverbank, Lasizisirang's tired and breathless horse eventually slowed. Lasizisirang pulled the reins and helped Layinsuu dismount. The lovers turned and walked into the woods with the horse following. Beyond the woods, there was a farm field in which rows of harvested crops were lined up in the shape of the Chinese number character *ba* "八" 8.

Throwing the reins aside the two embraced and kissed madly. Their passion burned as if a blazing fire and dry wood had been thrown together. They rolled in the meadow: Layinsuu's rhythmic moans grew weaker and slower until they finally disappeared altogether under the vast evening sky. Meanwhile the horse leisurely grazed in a meadow nearby.

Exhausted, they stood up and sat side-by-side, cross-legged in the meadow.

"I'm more relaxed now. I don't know where my fatigue has gone," Lasizisirang said, smiling as he took the tobacco bag Layinsuu had embroidered from his sash. Untying the bag's upper opening, he took the pipe out and filled the small brass bowl with strong local

tobacco. Taking a bit of tinder and flint, he struck a light and lit some dry twisted flax. He lit the tobacco with the burning flax and began puffing.

"I have taken away your fatigue," Layinsuu teased, gently rubbing his braided pigtail.

"Only you can take away the fatigue in my life," Lasizisirang said, puffing.

"Tell me, why have you come to see me this evening?" Layinsuu suddenly asked.

Lasizisirang sighed deeply, "It's a long story. My family is forcing me to marry my maternal uncle's daughter, Lirixjinsuu. We grew up together. Now she's a tall strong woman. I told my family that I didn't want to marry her. I declared I wanted to marry only you and asked my family to send a matchmaker to your Mansion to propose, but they rejected my pleas. They said it was impossible because I'm a subject of your Mansion and you are a noble daughter of the Mansion. They said such a marriage between a subject and their Lord of Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion has never happened in the past.

"This morning my maternal uncle and some other clan members came to my home to arrange my wedding. They agreed it would be held during the coming Spring Festival. I interrupted them, declaring that I didn't want Lirixjinsuu to move into my home and become my wife. They were dumbfounded. After this, I immediately left. That's why I've come to see you this evening. Thank you for coming out to see me. Otherwise, I don't know how I would cope with this day of extreme suffering."

Once again Lasizisirang lit his tobacco with the burning flax dry straw. He puffed another brass bowl of tobacco. After smoking, he cleaned the bowl with a metal hook attached to the bag, tapped it to clear out the burned flax straw, and put it inside the tobacco bag with the pipe. The opening was tied with a string attached around the bag. Finally, he stuffed the tobacco bag back in his sash.

The cool night wind gently caressed their faces as they talked,

expressing seemingly endless love. The two fully enjoyed this world in which they were the only two people.

"Thank you so much for coming to visit me. I don't know if there is some way that we two can truly walk together in the future," Layinsuu said sadly.

For a while, the two sat and Layinsuu sobbed:

Mongghul aaguni xosuuwa,	Young Mongghul woman's colored robe,
Mongghul jaliuni	Young Mongghul man's embroidered
shdarighawa.	tobacco bag.
Nukuari teni sgiliwa,	My lover's heart,
Gaara tensa datinna.	Much sweeter than sugar.

With his hand cupping his chin Lasizisirang, finished his low Mongghul love song. Under Great Heaven and in the vast darkness, his beautiful voice was exceptionally clear and emotional.

Layinsuu then began singing, touching her right cheek with her right hand,

Namuri qog kurina,	In autumn,
Ula tangdi nughuunna.	Hills and verdant plains are still green.
Nukuari tada kuriwa,	By my lover,
Halang narasa halangna.	My heart is hotter than the hottest sun.

Her voice, clear as crystal, resonated deeply in Lasizisirang's ears. After clearing his throat, he sang:

Duri tingereni fuudiwa,	Stars in high Heaven,
Hara ghajarini srinna.	Shadows on the black Earth.
Layinsuu teni sgiliwa,	Layinsuu's heart,
Zangnaa balisa datinna.	Much sweeter than honey.

Layinsuu then sang:

Duluun Lunkuangni jaliuwa,	Young Mongghul men of the Seven
	Valleys,
Duralagungi yiina.	Attractive and charming.
Lasizisirang aawuni	Brother Lasizisirang's physique,
mararani,	
Qiilagu loggi gua.	Love him very much.

After singing, Layinsuu was still distraught and resumed sobbing while resting her head on Lasizisirang's bosom. Lasizisirang tightly embraced her, licking hot tears from her face.

It was already midnight. The clear sky glittered with countless bright stars. The early autumn wind chilled the two lovers. Walking to the field, Lasizisirang brought back several wheat sheaves which they used to set up a simple blind in the meadow. Lasizisirang took his white sheepskin robe from the horse and placed it on the ground inside their makeshift room. After covering them both with his robe inside this "luxurious inn" that had just enough space for the two of them, they lay under the warmth of the robe, clinging tightly to each other.


The innumerable dazzling stars were their lights; the green grass was their mattress; the faithful horse was their companion; and the green willow trees, shrubs, green grass, various wildflowers, and the gurgling Wuxi River served as the garden of their wondrous homeland.

Under the robe, Lasizisirang and Layinsuu whispered feelings from their innermost heart as if they were the only two humans in the world. They felt they were the happiest people under Heaven.

The night was a sleepless one.

24

A FAMILY MEETING AT THE MANSION

t dawn, arriving at the Mansion, Layinsuu pushed the front gate open and walked in. Her mother, Wuxihua, was there in the doorway to meet her, an ox-hide whip in her hand. Layinsuu was shocked. She immediately realized that her mother and others had already discovered she hadn't been in the Mansion overnight.

"Where did you go, wild girl? Why didn't you stay outside? Why did you return?" Wuxihua shouted madly.

Layinsuu remained silent and still. The longer Layinsuu remained silent, the angrier Wuxihua grew. Walking towards Layinsuu she whipped her, scolding, "You wild girl! I can't stop you hanging out with wild men! I know you have grown up! Shameless! What a terribly disgraceful thing you have done, shaming me, your father, Monk Nangsuu, and the Mansion!"

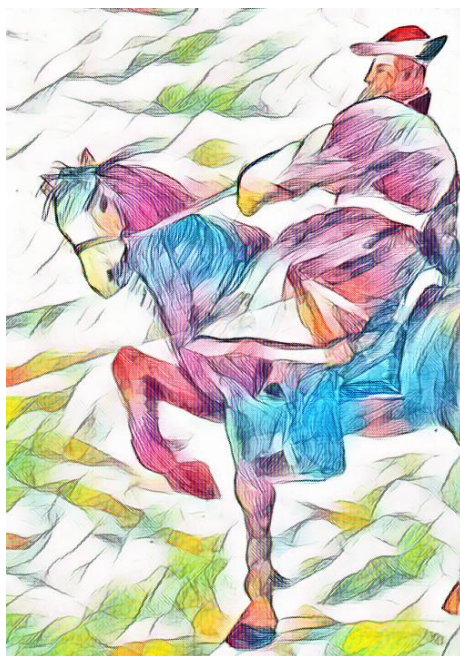
Layinsuu cried loudly. The pain was unbearable. Under such torture, she eventually confessed that she had spent the night with Lasizisirang.

Monk Nangsuu recalled the suggestion made by his former wife, Liuyansuu, that Layinsuu and Jiraqog should become wives to Hgunqog's sons. Only in this way could the noble blood of the Nangsuu families remain pure. If they did not prevent Layinsuu and Jiraqog's contact with Lasizisirang and the Mansion's servant, Laxja, the family line would become mixed and impure. He decided Liuyansuu's idea was best. Hgunqog had four sons, whereas Zanan and Mamadii were childless, except for their adoptive daughters. Monk Nangsuu admitted to himself that Liuyansuu was indeed resourceful and regretted that she had left him.

On that same day after breakfast, Monk Nangsuu organized a solemn family meeting in the guest room of his living courtyard. The main participants were Monk Nangsuu's mother, Srangsuu; Monk Nangsuu and his second wife, Sishihua; Zanan and his wife, Wuxihua; Hgunqog and his wife, Layajii; and Mamadii and his wife, Srinsuu.

Once everyone was seated, Monk Nangsuu began, "Today, this critical family meeting must find a solution to Layinsuu's and Jiraqog's marriages. As you know Layinsuu has been with Lasizisirang, the son of our Luxuu subject clan head. Marriage between the two is impossible. They have been our subjects for centuries. We are a noble family. Such a marriage would disgrace our Mansion.

"Jiraqog is now a member of the Mansion and has fallen in love with our servant, Laxja. This relationship is also impossible. I object to the two being together. We must intervene to keep our Mansion's bloodlines pure. These are my thoughts regarding the future of the two daughters. Do you agree?"



Sitting next to Monk Nangsuu, Zanan began, "I agree. If Lasizisirang continues to mess with my daughter, Layinsuu, I will severely beat him."

"No, I don't agree," interjected Hgunqog. "We have already lost several subject clans in Xuanglang, Darima, and Wuxi. If we beat Lasizisirang, we might also lose our Luxuu subjects. Of all the subject clans in the Seven Valleys, the Luxuu Clan has been the most faithful. Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion's power will be further weakened. We

must find a better way to deal with this."

Monk Nangsuu waited for the others to respond, but when no one did, he resumed, "I agree with Hgunqog. We will not use physical punishment. We must consider everything. Tughuan Nangsuu can't survive without our Luxuu subjects. Our Niuqi Clan head, Duriji, has a daughter. Some of us should act as matchmakers to negotiate between Duriji and Limusirang, who is both the head of the Luxuu Clan and Lasizisirang's father. We can try to arrange a marriage between Duriji's daughter and Lasizisirang. I think it is possible because their lord at the Mansion will have initiated this marriage. By arranging this marriage, we can make the relationship between the two subject clans closer, and reinforce our Mansion's control over them."

Monk Nangsuu's mother, Srangsuu nodded exclaiming, "Splendid!"

"What do the rest of you think?" Monk Nangsuu asked.

All agreed that it was an excellent solution.

While sipping his tea Monk Nangsuu continued, "Now let's talk about another topic. At the moment I have no children. Liuyansuu has taken my son to Jiloghuali to make their new lives. Zanan, Hgunqog, and Mamadii, you three are brothers. You, Zanan and Mamadii, have no sons. Only you, Hgunqog, have sons - four of them. We don't want Layinsuu and Jiraqog to marry outside the Mansion. To keep the noble bloodline of the Mansion I would like you, Hgunqog, to give one of your sons to Layinsuu to become her husband and another to Jiraqog. Do all of you agree?"

They all kept silent.

"Do you agree, Zanan?" Monk Nangsuu asked directly.

"Keeping our bloodline pure is important. It's fine by me," Zanan replied, seemingly hiding something. Actually, he didn't like Hgunqog's sons. All, with the exception of the first son Sangjijaxi, were very spoiled.

"Mamadii, what do you think?" persisted Monk Nangsuu.

"I agree with Zanan."

"What about you, Hgunqog? Will you allow your sons to marry them?" Monk Nangsuu asked earnestly.

Looking at everyone Hgunqog declared, "No, I don't want this! I have only four sons. I don't want to give my sons to anybody, not even my brothers."

Stomping the ground in rage Monk Nangsuu exclaimed, "How selfish! You are thinking only of yourself. You give no thought to the Mansion's interest. I'm giving you official notice you that if you don't promise to cooperate on this important matter on behalf of Nangsuu Mansion, you are to take your family and move out of the Mansion immediately. Lead your own lives by yourselves! We'll find a way to solve this matter without you!"

Still enraged, Monk Nangsuu then declared the meeting over.

"Calm down please!" exclaimed Monk Nangsuu's mother, Srangsuu. Standing up she said, "Hgunqog, you'd better support the Mansion's arrangement and consider how to help the Mansion develop and become more prosperous! I hope there is no conflict among the Nangsuu people inside the Mansion. We should unite as one. If we all stick together, we can overcome any problems no matter how difficult."

Looking at each other, they had to acknowledge that Srangsuu was right.

Finally, Hgunqog conceded. His first son, Sangjijaxi, and the fourth son, Limujansan would stay with him. The second son, Limusairang, was given to Zanan to marry Layinsuu. The third son, Hgunqogsirang, was given to Mamadii to marry Jiraqog.


They decided to hold the wedding ceremonies during the coming Spring Festival.

Sipping his tea to moisten his dry lips, Monk Nangsuu said, "Zanan, I entrust you to liaise with Lasizisirang's and Duriji's families and to do your best to make sure the two families become relatives by marriage as soon as possible."

Standing up Zanan promised, "Uncle Nangsuu, don't worry! I will manage this well."

25

LASIZISIRANG'S WEDDING

n response to Zanan's matchmaking efforts, Lasizisirang finally and painfully agreed. He knew if he didn't, the relationship between Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion and his clan would be unpleasant. Thus, a marriage between subjects of the Luxuu Clan and the Niuqi Clan was agreed between Lasizisirang and Duriji's daughter, Qixangsuu. Limusirang's home gave betrothal gifts of three horses and three yaks to Duriji's home.

To determine a propitious wedding date, Lasizisirang's family consulted Niidosang, their village spear deity, who indicated that the wedding ceremony should be performed on the sixth day of the first lunar month during the Spring Festival. Most Mongghul weddings that year were to be held on this same day as determined by local deities in the Seven Valleys. Layinsuu and Jiraqog's wedding was also scheduled for the sixth day of the Spring Festival as designated by Xuanglang Liuya Deity. Sangjijaxi, the matchmaker for Nangsuu Mansion, was responsible for preparing the banquet to be held at Duriji's home in Niuqi, and the other banquet to be held in Lasizisirang's home. Zanan had to take part in Layinsuu's and Jiraqog's weddings on the same day at Nangsuu Mansion.

On the fifth day of the first lunar month, a banquet was held at Duriji's home in Niuqi Village for Qixangsuu, who would marry and leave her parents' home for her husband's home in Luxuu Village in the early morning of the following day, the sixth day.

Early on the designated morning, villagers, clan members, and relatives gathered in Duriji's courtyard to see Qixangsuu leave her home. Before leaving, a hair-changing ritual was held. After the two bride-takers finished the "Opening the Bride's Door" song, the

door of Qixangsuu's room was opened and the matchmaker, Sangjijaxi, entered her room with Lasizisirang. Sangjijaxi took Qixangsuu's mounting-horse skirt into the courtyard and threw it onto the roof. Lasizisirang walked over to his wife, Qixangsuu, untied her hair, and tied the hair string around his ankle. Then using a double-toothed comb, he tilted his head forward and down and combed his hair from the back to the front three times. He next combed Qixangsuu's hair back three times.

Next, Sangjijaxi placed a volume of scriptures, a branch of cypress, a measure of grain, a brick of black tea, a lamp, a bunch of white sheep wool, a bowl of milk, and a handful of chopsticks on a chest nearby. A table covered with a piece of white felt was placed in the room. Qixangsuu sat on the white felt facing outside, while her mother sat facing inside. They sat back to back. From outside the bride-takers began singing:

¹Nige dobog logsa wariji doda,

²Aagu furaji hariji rsa,

³Danbiiqiini turani kuijan.

¹Take a volume of scripture to call propitiousness,

²When the bride returns home,

³Scriptures will be inside the home.

⁴Nige ralog xuguasa wariji doda,

⁵Aagu furaji hariji rsa,

⁶Sangriji sangrani turani kuijan.

⁴Take a branch of cypress to call propitiousness,

⁵When the bride returns home,

⁶The deities' decrees will be fulfilled inside the room.

⁷Nige shangzi taraasa wariji doda,

⁸Aagu furaji hariji rsa,

⁹Jangdi banzani turani murigin.

⁷Take a *sheng* of grain to call propitiousness,

⁸When the bride returns home,

⁹Hundreds of full grain chests will be inside the room.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:76).

While the bride-takers sang, a woman older than Qixangsuu circled Qixangsuu's head with a cypress branch. When the ritual was complete, Qixangsuu was lifted onto another piece of white felt by four people and carried in circles around the small garden plot in the courtyard center. Seeing the bride leaving her parents' home, the women in the courtyard began lamenting. The bride-takers waved their sleeves in front of Qixangsuu and sang while she walked out of her courtyard lamenting:

¹Gerni turasa ghariji rwa,

²Halidan halighana halighaji rwa,

³Xaazi xjiidingi rwa,

⁴Sulighui ghuran do sgorila,

⁵Aagu furaji hariji rsa,

⁶Bazarini madingi pughaji giin ju.

¹Coming out from inside the house,

²Stepping out with golden paces,

³Coming to the courtyard,

⁴Circling thrice to the left,

⁵When the bride returns home,

⁶City-like buildings will have been built.

⁷Warang ghuran do sgorila,

⁸Aagu furaji hariji rsa,

⁹Sman madingi pusighaji giin ju.

⁷Circling thrice to the right,

⁸When the bride returns home,

⁹Buildings resembling temples will have been built.¹⁵⁰

After Qixangsuu mounted the horse, her father, Duriji, waved a cypress branch tied with sheep's wool behind the horse and called "Qixangsuu, respond to me! Qixangsuu, respond to me!"

When a bride married out, she might take the family's luck with her so her father called it back. At the same time, the bride-takers sang "Keeping the Family Luck." Qixangsuu's elder brother led her horse in a circle three times in the lane in front of the home. When the bride and her entourage set out, the bride-takers waved their sleeves in front of the escort group singing:

¹⁵⁰ See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:78).

- | | |
|--|--|
| ¹ Hunghua botuusa wariji doda | ¹ I call with the pink headdress, |
| ² Kamii jiurasa furaini giya. | ² The family luck from under her veil remains in her parent's home. |
| ³ Yohun hugosa wariji doda, | ³ I call with Qixangsuu's precious hair, |
| ⁴ Kugo durasa furaini giya. | ⁴ The family luck remains among her hair in her parent's home. |
| ⁵ Fulaan tuuxangsa wariji doda, | ⁵ I call with Qixangsuu's red-hair string, |
| ⁶ Alida jiurasa furaini giya. | ⁶ The family luck remains from her upper arms in her parent's home. |
| ⁷ Mengu suugasa wariji doda, | ⁷ I call with Qixangsuu's silver earrings, |
| ⁸ Qigi nudunsa furaini giya. | ⁸ The family luck remains from the ears and eyes in her parent's home. ¹⁵¹ |

When the bride-takers finished dancing, the first entourage began walking toward Lasizisirang's home located in Luxuu Village in Haliqi. This group consisted of the bride, her companion (the bride's elder sister), and a band of others carrying the dowry chest. As they set out the bride lamented:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ¹ Mori muxigu muni aagha yiu, | ¹ My brother by the front horse, |
| ² Qi ghadari kuadiliji, | ² You hold its bit, |
| ³ Muxi ghoori haligha yiuwani, | ³ When walking forward two steps, |
| ⁴ Huina furaji ghuran haligha harida, | ⁴ Please walk back three steps, |
| ⁵ Ayili kuxinni aamii ninedi, | ⁵ Clan grandmothers, |
| ⁶ Muni aawii aamiini nige guala. | ⁶ Care for my parents after I'm gone. |
| ⁷ Muni aawii aamii, | ⁷ My parents, |
| ⁸ Haran nesidi hara yamuna sanasa | ⁸ Will think of their ten-year-old daughter, |
| ⁹ Qi lii sanagha shdan ju. | ⁹ Persuade them to stop thinking about me. |

¹⁵¹ See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:79-80).

¹⁰Hurin nesidi muni aagha yiu,

¹¹Niudurigu durishdi,

¹²Bu aamiina halang suuniini
huughawa ju.

¹³Qi huina furaji hariji xjigula,

¹⁴Budahgini aawii aamiini yutan
sgilini wuudiji gi ju.

¹⁰My twenty-year-old brother,

¹¹On today's day,

¹²I've saddened Mother.

¹³When you return home later,

¹⁴Please persuade our parents to
widen their narrow hearts.¹⁵²

Duriji's grandson also accompanied the bride sitting behind her on her horse. About fifty escorts selected strictly according to custom from among relatives, village households, and clan members escorted the bride to Luxuu Village. Mounted on their fine horses and dressed in their lambskin hats, white lambskin robes, and long boots, they set out across valleys and hills like a group of soldiers going to battle.

Around lunchtime, they reached the entrance to Luxuu Village. Nearing Lasizisirang's home the entourage began singing:

¹Ulani duwasa,

²Lasizi dangladija,

³Qighaan ghuasila
shdurilaji,

⁴Lasizini baisighawa.

⁵Shge szangni gharighaji,

⁶Laghang purghanni
baisighawa.

¹When we were ascending mountains,

²Stopped by the *lasizi*,

³Held a *lasizi* ceremony with propitious
white wool,

⁴To delight the *lasizi* deity.

⁵We offered a large incense offering,

⁶To delight the temple deities.

⁷Wuu tangsa,

⁸Tangni rdunbinni,

⁹Kugua taarila shdurilaji,

¹⁰Tangni rdunbinni
baisighawa.

⁷When we were walking on the wide
plains,

⁸Met the *rdunbin* of the plain,

⁹Held a *rdunbin* ceremony with grey
stones,

¹⁰To delight the plain's *rdunbin*.

¹⁵² See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:83).

¹¹Jangni moorishdi kurisa,
¹²Smu tusighuaqi kuradija,
¹³Hurinni moorishdi kurisa,
¹⁴Huni tusighuaqi kuradija.

¹¹When we were walking one hundred
*li*¹⁵³ away from the groom's home,
¹²We were received by soldiers sent by
 the groom's side to meet the bride's
 entourage with liquor.
¹³When we were walking twenty *li* away,
¹⁴We were received by sheep receivers.

¹⁵Aagu bosa ziilegu rguan,
¹⁶Luan morila ziilegu rguan,
¹⁷Lii ziilesa lii bon ju.

¹⁵When our bride dismounts and is
 received,
¹⁶She must be received with many
 horses,
¹⁷She cannot dismount without being
 received with many horses.

¹⁸Aagu bosa ziilegu rguan,
¹⁹Luan musila ziilegu rguan,
²⁰Lii ziilesa lii bon ju.

¹⁸When our bride dismounts and is
 received,
¹⁹She must be received with many yaks,
²⁰She cannot dismount without being
 received with many yaks.

²¹Aagu bosa ziilegu rguan,
²²Luan hunila ziilegu rguan,
²³Lii ziilesa lii bon ju.

²¹When our bride dismounts to be
 received,
²²She must be received with many
 sheep,
²³She cannot dismount without being
 received with many sheep.¹⁵⁴

In front of their gate, in readiness to receive the entourage, Lasizisirang's side had set a table on which were placed a white strip of silk, holy bread, whitish milky water, an arrow stuck in a box of

¹⁵³ One *li* = a half kilometer.

¹⁵⁴ See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:86-87).

wheat husks, and a bottle tied with a red cloth.

Lasizisirang's people assembled and waited for the entourage's arrival.

Qixangsuu and her escorts arrived at Lasizisirang's front gate and were welcomed into his home. The courtyard was full of participants. A square table had been set up in the upper courtyard. As the escorts sang "Thanking the Matchmaker"¹⁵⁵ the bride's side placed money on three of the table's four corners, while the groom's side put money in the center and on the one remaining corner of the table. This was repeated three times to thank the matchmaker. After each time, butter was smeared on the matchmaker's forehead. Highland roasted barley mixed with liquor was put in his mouth. Teased with the question, "Are you male or female?" Sangjijaxi answered, "I'm male!"

At the same time escorts and some men from Lasizisirang's side again began singing "Thanking the Matchmaker":

¹Xmera wariwa, xmeriqi
wariwa,

²Zandan muudini diranjin,

³Szunba muudini timuxii,

⁴Qighaan sbaini taligha,

⁵Hara sbaini durasi,

⁶Liuliwani langhua,

⁷Garuu dangni qogxja,

⁸Qighaan hunini ghuasi,

⁹Musi wuneeni tuusi,

¹⁰Manglii hani xmeri,

¹¹Ama hani taligha.

¹Respectable matchmaker, respectable
matchmaker,

²Sandalwood tray,

³Pine-wood spoon,

⁴Roasted white highland barley flour,

⁵Black highland barley liquor,

⁶A glazed-tile bottle,

⁷White china small cups of liquor,

⁸White sheep wool,

⁹Yak butter,

¹⁰Butter on the forehead,

¹¹Roasted highland barley flour in the
matchmaker's mouth.¹⁵⁶

This melodious song resounded loudly and clearly in the

¹⁵⁵ Wariwa Xerimalagu Dog.

¹⁵⁶ See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:94-95).

courtyard where the atmosphere was joyful and merry.

The crowd stared at Sangijaxi, a matchmaker, a nobleman, and a lord from Lasizisirang's clan in Luuxu Village. He smiled with happiness as both the bride and groom's people genuinely thanked him. Butter was smeared on his forehead, his face was dotted with highland barley flour, and many strips of silk were draped across his shoulders. Being a matchmaker was very honorable and he was considered to be an important guest.

After the ceremony, the groom's hat, outer clothing, and shoes were replaced by new ones brought from the bride's home. Lasizisirang's side made a speech to the escorts expressing appreciation for bringing their treasured girl to the groom's home. Before the speech, square chunks of unskinned pork were put on the table to show great respect. These pork pieces were presented only to certain important guests, including the maternal uncle, the bride's companion, and the bride's father. Some coins were also put on the table, symbolizing compensation to the bride's parents for rearing such a good bride. A senior, respected man from Lasizisirang's side began praising and thanking the escorts:

¹Jubda ne sghan sghuuni sghan
fan, sararsa lighasan sara, durirsa
lighasan duriwa. Niudurigu durini
sgghan sghuudini, gaqanni aayang
zhuanbughunla morilaji, ulaha ula
duwaji, tangha tang nogxjiji, ndani
kudu bojiigu tewa. Dii tanghunla
xjiribuhangi soji siida rdengi
shdawu? Muu hgoliqog shdasa
adasa nige yaxijingi xiilaya.

¹Truly, at a good time in a good
year, we have chosen a lunar
month among lunar months, and
a day among days. On this good
day, venerable maternal uncle
and guests have crossed
mountain after mountain and
tramped over plain after plain to
reach our home with horses.
Furthermore, I wonder if you are
seated comfortably and slowly
eating to your satisfaction? I, an
insignificant man, offer a speech
regardless of my ability.

²Tingereni nara lii bosa,
Duri suanini hugua adan.

²Heaven's sun has not risen,
It cannot be determined if it is day
or night.

³Ghajarini gugu xuu lii hiilasa,
Yeri rgulini hugua adan.

³Earth's cuckoos are not calling,
It cannot be determined if it is
summer or winter.

Aayang zhuanbuni lii shdurilasa,
Jigha durani hugua adan.

If the maternal uncle and guests
are not praised,
Seats of greatest and least
importance cannot be
distinguished.

⁴Durilagu nara lii bosa,
Snqandi halang gujinna.
Suanigu sara lii bosa,
Snqandi gigeen gujinna.

⁴No sunshine during the day,
No warmth in the world.
Night's moon has not risen,
No brightness in the world.

⁵Hurindi huringqi lii bosa,
Snqanni dundog lii zhilen.

⁵If no escorts came to the
wedding feast,
Marriages could not be held in the
world.

⁶Fuudi narani sgorilogsa,
Tingereni dundog zhilena.
Lama maniina xrigighasa,
Danbiiqiini dundog zhilena.
Zhuanbu xraini sgorilogsa,
Snqanni dundog zhilena.

⁶The sun circled by the stars,
Things of the sky are done so well.
Lamas spinning prayer wheels,
Buddhist affairs are done so well.
Guests circling the table,
Marriages are done so well in the
world.

⁷Rara ulani tulighuindi,
Sangrijini huajii ncoglaja.
Rara ulani dundadini,
Purghanni langxa ncoglaja.
Rara ulani durani,
Hara turuudi niilandi ncoglaja.

⁷On Mount Sumeru¹⁵⁷ peaks,
Gathering Buddha's light.
Midway up Sumeru,
Gathering deities' treasure trees.
At Sumeru's foot,
Gather common people who make
a marriage.

⁸Tiiwarini qii darilasa,

Zhinqan lamani saindiwa.
Qidari ghajarishdi qii darilasa,

Murigeen hanjenni saindiwa.
Mongghul ghajarishdi rog warisa,

Gaqan wariwani saindiwa.

⁸Tibetans carry forward Buddhist
scriptures so well,
Rely on respectable lamas.
Chinese areas practiced Buddha
scriptures so well,
Rely on wise emperors.
Marriages held in Mongghul
areas,
Rely on respectable
matchmakers.

⁹Wariwa dide yamahgii gaqanna!
Qangni fuudiniini tijin wariwawa,

Nzhisarinzhangni wariniini tijin
wariwawa,
Sngani sunla qorilajin wariwawa,

Tulighuinsa duranda jojasa
jighanda,
Tirige tuurighula furuujin
wariwawa.

⁹How venerable the matchmaker is!
The matchmaker ought to be
offered phoenix feathers,
The matchmaker ought to be
offered kylin horns,
The matchmaker ought to be
offered lion's milk,
From head to toe and from toe to
head,
The matchmaker ought to be
covered with silk and satin.

¹⁰Jubda wariwani sog tensani

¹⁰It is not necessary to mention

¹⁵⁷ Sacred mountain of Buddhist cosmology and the center of all the spiritual universes.

kilegu muriguun, buda ghoori
 rogni dundogdi nogxji da togxji
 togxji da nogxji, guaiji tuulii
 moorini yiuji tiriga moori lighaji.
 Durini bonidighaji bonini
 durishdighaja. Warimaa taarini
 tigii dundogni nigera tiwa.
 Niudurigu durishdi ganghgiri snga
 tigii qangqan nuruu madi shge
 hurindi rsa. Naniilog quiqanni
 salimangi dalasa ninba. Niudurigu
 durishdi buda ghoori qinsang, xjun
 kurigeeji shge hurin rdeji. Rgan
 wariwa dideni saindiwa wariwa
 dide durasingi wari.

the matchmaker's true merits and
 virtues in accomplishing the
 marriage by coming and going,
 going and coming between the
 two sides so that a rabbit road
 became a cart road. High was
 made low and low was made high.
 This was all done for the marriage
 procedures which you performed
 between the two sides like a
 steelyard's sliding weight.
 On today's day, you resemble a
 snow-covered mountain lion and a
 phoenix-like pearl that has come
 to the great wedding feast. We
 ought to put up a precious
 parasol. Today our two families
 hold a wedding and eat a
 magnificent wedding feast. All of
 this depended on the venerable
 matchmaker and liquor should be
 offered to the respected
 matchmaker.

¹¹Jubda, Sangriji hara ghajarini
 qolaghaji jiidan koriwani
 darilaghaji. Buda Mongghul hanni
 kuu xjun Mongghul ghajarishdina
 adalni laji boji rjiigu tewa.

¹¹Truly, Buddha's created the
 black earth and formed customs.
 Our Mongghul khan's children
 have lived in our Mongghul areas.

¹²Jubda budahgi diihanni rogwa
 giji. Hojin rogsa xni rogmangi
 jilighasa saihanna, hojin deeldi xni
 jighamangi ghadisa nudu nela

¹²Truly, we are going to be related
 for a long time. When old relatives
 join with new relatives it is as fine
 as old clothes having new collars

noggundi saihaana. Hojin
 purghandi xni szemangi janqisa
 manglii nela jalagundi saihaana
 giji. Jubda ghoori rogshdi rog
 warigu kamangi yiina. Teni gaqan
 qingsangdi qangqan tigii xjungi
 xjiileji. Ndani qingsangdi snga tigii
 kuungi xjiileji. Shduguhgi
 shnangwa jiulaji da jirihga yidiji,
 mulahgi nige nigena duran kuriji.
 Jubda rog warigu moorigi
 maiszasa yiina.

sewn on, something pleasant for
 the eyes. It is good to touch deity
 images with the forehead when
 deities clad in old clothes are
 dressed in new clothing. Truly, our
 two sides are laying a foundation
 for future relations. In your
 important bride's family, a girl
 rises, phoenix-like. In our
 insignificant groom's family, a boy
 rises, lion-like. Elders are
 even-tempered and
 good-humored and youth love
 each other. Truly, a marriage road
 has been made.

¹³Jubda tingereshdi kiimangi tiuji
 langmangi zhileji huraangi zhilena.
 Ghajarishdi wariwani
 guaidalimangi guaiji rogni
 zhileja, xuumiisa wariwani liusani
 xodogdi xuang langhuala yiuji
 dundogni szaghala rji. Tehgi lii
 darilaji budahgini niizhangni lii
 jarilaji liguna da liguna giji
 dayinlaji dundogni nigera tiisana.

¹³Truly, rain is portended when the
 sky is covered with clouds and
 winds blow. Marriages are
 portended when a matchmaker
 mounts a mule, takes a pair of
 liquor bottles for the insignificant
 groom's family and goes forward
 to inquire about marriage. You did
 not despise and ignore our
 poverty, instead, you so willingly
 promised and settled the
 marriage.

¹⁴Fan sarada duwaji maliwa.
 Budahgini xjunni kurigeegu lija,
 kuuda kurigeenqilagu lija.
 Dundogni zhileghagii ga, ghoori

¹⁴Time flew past. Our girl reached
 an age to marry and the boy
 reached a son-in-law's age. In the
 performance of the wedding

rog sangrijini sangra da rjawuuni
qishiziini dighaja. Wariwani
ugoniini sgaji, fan rsa fan lighaji.
Sara rsa sara lighaji. Duri rsa duri
lighaji. Jubda sain fanni sain sara.
Sain sarani sain duri. Sain
durishdi zhilejin sain dundogwa.

procedures, the two sides abided
by Buddhist dictates and the
emperor's codes. According to the
matchmaker's decision, the
marriage date was carefully
chosen. Truly, the exact lunar
month in the exact year was
chosen. The exact day in the exact
lunar month was chosen. A
magnificent deed was performed
on the exact day.

¹⁵Aayang zhuanbuni muxi
shdimaa muhani ghada tigii szilaji
qa durasini dalii tigii gharighasa
ninba. Budahgi ningiji xjiligha
shdaji guigu tewa. Do aayang
tanghunla gashizoggi wari. Lii
kurigu ghajarishdi ne qighaan
gashizog da hanqin zoyala
buulanii. Niuduri aayang
zhuanbughunla tirigala tiiji
timeenla xjaji nige amadi
rnbuqiina ndani kudu boghajiigu
tewa. Naniilog budahgi aayang
zhuanbuni muxigu xraira sri xriini
zhuan gharighasa ninba jida
budahgi ningi shdaja gua.

¹⁵We should have put a mountain
of bread and meat before the
maternal uncle and guests and
offered a sea of liquor and tea to
the guests. But we could not do
so. Now maternal uncles, please
take small cups of liquor. Forgive
us for our poor arrangements.
Now please drink from these
small white cups of liquor and
accept our apology. Today, the
maternal uncles and guests
willingly brought treasures with
carts and loaded camels and
came to our family. We ought to
respectfully place pieces of
unskinned pork on the table
before the maternal uncle and
guests to thank you, but this we
could not do.

¹⁶Do budahgi waarogni nige guleya. Jubda fan saralaji, durila lisigana hgalaji, suanigu noorina hgalaji nudu fuleji nuri yidiji. Shdurini hguaridighaji hguarini shduridighaji. Janggi hiiqi menghanggi jiu timungi shdasi ghudilighajiigu tewa. Njeena tuusi solighana hgalaji buda ghoori rogni szu solighani fulala rjiigu tewa. Nela lii liji, darang lisigani dangmaani sasasa lii alidighaji dogu shdaari naniilog giji rjiigu tewa. Jubda zomutuushidiwa, naniilog zomutuushidiingi gharigu waarog zhuanni yiina jida budahgi ningijida xjiligha shdaji gua. Shdimaa desiga, muha sgaa da jirighun seerigiwa, mindii kadoggila hgalanii. Waarogda haliungi baisiwa saihan ugomangi boguxja.

¹⁶We will now describe the bride's companion's merits and achievements. Truly, for a long while, the bride's companion has neglected her farm work during the day. She has missed sleep at night which has made her eyes red. She has worked so hard to fully finish this wedding that she has suffered loin and back pains. In order to successfully perform the wedding, she has tried her best and sewn long to short and short to long and made everything smooth. She has used scissors hundreds of times, needles thousands of times, and tens of thousands of threads in sewing. Not only this, she has been careless of her own oil vat but she has come to our two families to care for our water vats. Not only this, she has not forgotten the old customs handed down from ancient times and combined them with modern customs. In this way, she has successfully accomplished this important wedding. So truly, you are an ox and ought to be offered a piece of unskinned ox meat suitable for a bride's companion, but we could not do this. Here, we offer holy bread, a portion of meat, six coins,

and also a strip of silk to thank you. We hope you will happily receive all of these gifts.

¹⁷Ghuda dide da yiiguala saihangi
dayinlaji hairighana kurigeeji rja.
Naniilog ghuda didedi sangrijini
zhuanmangi gharighasada ninba.
Ne shdaarida teni xjiligha shdaji
gua, do ndiriini ne muhala
budahgini sgilinangi harilinii.

¹⁷Now we should thank the bride's father and the other guests. The respected bride's father and others willingly agreed and sent their lovely girl to our home. We should offer the most important gifts to the respected bride's father. But this could not be done, so here we respectfully offer the meat to express our hearts.¹⁵⁸

Later in the afternoon, the groom's side began singing "Haijee," signifying that the escorts were about to leave:

¹Haijee - haijee

¹*Haijee - haijee*

²Ghuashdi ghuashdi ghariji ra,

²Please come out more quickly,

³Halang durasi halangwa,

³Heated liquor is hot,

⁴Ayili kuxin kurigeenii.

⁴Clan members are all seeing us off.

⁵Haijee - haijee

⁵*Haijee - haijee*

⁶Ghuashdi ghuashdi ghariji ra,

⁶Please come out more quickly,

⁷Halang yikang halangwa,

⁷Heated seats are warm,

⁸Beeri bulai sgaaja.

⁸Wives and children await you all.¹⁵⁹

Hundreds of people from Lasizisirang's clan, Luxuu Village, Lasizisirang's friends and relatives, and from neighboring villages had come to Lasizisirang's home to see the escorts off, shouting,

¹⁵⁸ See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:101-106).

¹⁵⁹ See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:119-120).

"*Shdaqang!*"¹⁶⁰ as the escorts emerged one by one from Lasizisirang's home. They were each offered three cups of liquor as they strode out of the front gate.

After drinking the three cups of liquor, they immediately leaped onto their already readied horses. Once mounted, they gulped down their "mounting horse" liquor and rushed to the entrance of the village like cavalymen galloping to a battlefield. They leaned forward, whipped their horses, and shouted, "*Ohohog ai!*" Clouds of dust swirled in the air behind them. When some distance away, they again returned to Lasizisirang's front gate, demanding a second round of liquor. After drinking, once again they turned their horses' heads and galloped far into the distance as before. Then again, they galloped back to the front gate and drank their third round of three cups of liquor.

Having finished the three courses of "mounting horse" liquor, the escorts galloped directly into a big valley in the direction of the Niuqi area and soon disappeared.

The escorts had left to return home. However, Lasizisirang didn't return to his home. Instead, he walked to his family's wheat straw pile located on the courtyard's west wall. He was utterly exhausted after two extremely busy days in his wife's and his own home. He sprawled on the straw at the base of the big wheat straw pile. There, as the setting sunlight shone on him, he felt warm and comfortable. He thought of his beloved Layinsuu who had now married Limusairang, a noble, from Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion.

Putting his hands at the back of his head, he closed his eyes and thought, "Does that arrogant drunkard, Limusairang, think he can give Layinsuu a warm, happy future? She has contributed so much to the Mansion through her hard work. Did her own father from Jughuari attend his daughter's wedding?"

Though he understood the situation, he blamed himself for not becoming Layinsuu's husband. His family had to obey the wedding arrangements dictated by their lords, Monk Nangsuu and


¹⁶⁰ Horse mounting liquor.

his nephew, Zanan. It was hard to imagine what the relationship between the lord and his own subjects would be if they did not. It would surely deteriorate. As he pondered, he started to think that his marriage might have been deliberately planned by Nangsuu Mansion in order to distance him from Layinsuu. Feeling sad, tears rolled down his cheeks.

And then he fell asleep.

26

LAYINSUU AND JIRAQOG'S WEDDING

n that same propitious day, the sixth day of the first lunar month during the Spring Festival, Layinsuu's and Jiraqog's weddings were also being held, but in Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion.

In the early morning, as the sun was just rising from behind the east mountains, Layinsuu and Jiraqog were instructed to stand on two pieces of white felt facing the shrine rooms in the shrine courtyard. Layinsuu and Jiraqog were dressed in new, similar outfits. Jiraqog's dress had been sewn and embroidered by her mother, Rnqanhua, while Layinsuu's dress had been made by her mother, Wuxihua. Rnqanhua and Wuxihua had discussed the matter and sewn the outfits together in the same way.

The two brides proudly wore the noble Tughuan headdresses. The three-pronged pasteboard-fork of their headdresses stood tall and upright. Attached to each headdress were two large, heavy silver earrings. A plate with flower designs was soldered to the hooks of the earrings. Silver pins hung from this plate. Ribbons around their heads held up the earrings preventing them from tearing their ears. A chain encrusted with corals and pearls passed under their chins attaching the earrings to each other.

The two wore loose robes. Red, yellow, green, blue, and purple strips of cloth edged their long, wide sleeves. Colorful sashes that had required hundreds of hours of embroidery featuring bird heads and peony patterns were tied around their waists.

Both wore wide pants, the knees inlaid with a narrow white cloth, to cover their legs. On their feet, they wore tassel-tipped shoes patterned with embroidered birds' heads sewn with yellow, green, pink, and orange colored threads.

Two pincushions¹⁶¹ featuring embroidered peach blossoms and plum flower patterns with dangling tassels hung on each of their right thighs. Layinsuu and Jiraqog were as pretty as peacocks.

Monk Nangsuu's mother, Srangsuu; Monk Nangsuu and his second wife, Sishihua; Zanan and his wife, Wuxihua; Hgunqog and his wife, Layajii; Mamadii and his wife, Srinsuu; and other important guests were asked to sit in front of Layinsuu and Jiraqog. The guests also included Jiraqog's mother, Rnqanhua, the only person from Jiraqog's side. Her new clothes made her look very dignified.

While Rnqanhua was excited and satisfied that Jiraqog had become a daughter and would soon become a daughter-in-law in the noble Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion, she worried about her daughter's future life with Hgunqosirang, a notoriously lazy fellow.

It was indeed a unique wedding. Two brothers married two "sisters" in a Mongghul home. There were no escorts, bride companions, matchmakers, bride-takers, wedding songs, nor dancing. The celebrations were completely different from Lasizisirang's wedding that was being held on the same day in his home in Luxuu Village.

The Mansion, particularly the shrine courtyard, was packed with clan members, villagers, relatives, and guests from all their clans in the Seven Valleys.

Limusairang came and stood on the left side of Layinsuu while Hgunqosirang stood on Jiraqog's left side.

After an old, eloquent man finished a congratulatory speech for the two new couples, Limusairang, Layinsuu, Hgunqosirang, and Jiraqog prostrated three times to Buddha, the Emperor, the village Buddha images, the household Kitchen Goddess, the Mansion's grandfathers and grandmothers, and to the sisters-in-law who were all older than the brides. Next came the "changing the grooms'

¹⁶¹ *Jixjog* 'pincushion', a triangular ornament for women where needles were kept. The outside was embroidered with colorful threads in flower patterns. It was hung on the right thigh and worn at festivals. At other times, it was stored inside the woman's dowry chests.

clothing" rite.

Another length of white felt was brought and placed before the two couples. A table was placed on the felt and then a tray of bread was put on the table. Some white sheep's wool, butter, grain, and a bowl of milky water containing a cypress twig were also placed on the table. Limusairang and Hgunqosirang each held two bowls of liquor containing coins and jujubes. Two boys from the Mansion stood near Limusairang and Hgunqosirang.

The grooms now put aside their bowls and changed their hats, outer clothing, and shoes for new ones. They changed their clothes. Meanwhile, the elder began orating:

¹Ya, do niudurigu halidan tigii
qogdini, ndirii qighaan xjangni
ruan tiiji yiijin niruu kurigeendina
modoggi pughaya.

¹Ah, today is the same as a golden
time with white felt spread here
for a seat. Now I praise the
invaluable sons-in-law.

²Liu Rjawuuni xjunni Lancomawa,
Purghanni ghajarishdi kurigeeja,
Jiuqi Rjawuu wariwadi gharija.

²The Dragon King's daughter is
Lancoma,
Married and moved to the
Buddhist area,
Emperor Tailor acted as the
matchmaker.

Kurigeen musisan musiguni,
Xra liu bosan musiguwa.

Sons-in-law wore clothing,
Clothing imprinted with yellow
dragons.

³Purghanni xjunni Szamumawa,
Liuni ghajarishdi kurigeeja,

³Buddha's daughter is Szamuma,
Married out to the dragon area,

Pughuazhihua wariwadi gharija.

Pughuazhihua¹⁶² acted as the matchmaker.

Kurigeen musisan musiguni,

Sons-in-law wore clothing,

Kabari liu bosan musiguwa.

Clothing imprinted with precious dragons.

⁴Rjanog rjauuni xjunni

⁴The Chinese Emperor's daughter is Jazogangjog,¹⁶³

Jazogangjogwa,

Married to the Tibetan

Tiiwari Sangzanganbudi kurigeeja,

Sangzanganbu,

Lunbugodanba wariwadi gharija.

Lunbugodanba acted as the matchmaker.

Kurigeen musisan musiguni,

Sons-in-law wore clothing,

Liika liu bosan musiguwa.

Clothing imprinted with circling dragons.

⁵Niudurigu kurigeenningi

⁵Today, praise the sons-in-law,

shdurilasa,

How beautiful the grooms' clothes!

Kurigeenni musisanni saihanwa!

Threads twisted by spinning girls,

Murigiqi aagu tamusanna,

Cloth woven by weaving girls,

Murigiqi aagu nirisanna,

Clothing sewn by sewing girls.

Jiuqi aagu yuusanna.

⁶Shge rmaani turani,

⁶In the household,

Qighaan xjangni diisija.

Place the white felt.

¹⁶² Deity name.

¹⁶³ Jazogangjog (T, Rgya bza gong jo; C, Wencheng ?-680) married the Tibetan Emperor, Sangzanganbu (T, Srong btsan sgam po; C, Songzanganbu, 617-650) in 641. Lunbugodanba (T, Blon po mgar stong btsan) acted as the matchmaker (Limusishiden and Stuart 1998:96).

Qangqan tigii kurigeenna,
Qangqan tigii modog pughaya.

The phoenix-like sons-in-law,
Praise them as phoenix feathers.

⁷Snga tigii kurigeenna,
Snga yurali tigii modog pughaya.
Kugua liuni tigii kurigeenna,
Gahgari tigii modog pughaya.

⁷The lion-like sons-in-law,
Praise them as a lion's mane.
The grey-dragon-like sons-in-law,
Praise them as a dragon's beard.

⁸Kurigeenni malighaaniini
juughadisa,
Malighaani yama tigii duriwa!
Ruan durishdigu shdogwa.

⁸Let the sons-in-law put on a hat,

How tall the hats are!
Symbolizing high position.

⁹Kurigeen snbeena musadisa,
Snbeeni yama tigii wushuuwa!

⁹Let the sons-in-law put on a robe,
How suitable the robes are!

¹⁰Kurigeen puseena puseeladisa,
Puseeni yama tigii shduriwa!
Luan digiigu shanchiliwa.

¹⁰Let the sons-in-law tie a sash,
How long the sashes are!
Symbolizing a long life.

¹¹Kurigeen qarogna musadisa,
Qarogni yama tigii batiwa!
Tisiji sogu shdanchiliwa.

¹¹Let the sons-in-law put on shoes,
How firm the shoes are!
Symbolizing no lack of luck.

¹²Niudurigu kurigeenni musiguni,
Ghadaridi musisanni zholaja!
Jiura musisanni halangwa,

Jiura musisanni julanwa.

¹²Today the sons'-in-law clothing,
How nice the outer clothing is!
Warmth added to the inner
clothing,
Softness added to the inner
clothing.

¹³Kurigeendi juughajin kadogwa,

Ranka kadoggi puxii ju,

Lari ghuranni kadogwa,

Luri ghuranni kadogwa,

Xojasitowani xodariwa.

Kurigeenni gujira juughasa,

Yan yansada kuijan ju.

¹⁴Qighaan zandanni xrai,

Fulaan zandanni tawog,

Tawogrgu shdimaa,

Purghanni kayangna.

¹⁵Tawogra giisan hadang seeriwa,

Ranka seerila sarilan gua,

Durasi yighara tiidisa,

Seeri mengu turaji rgu

shdanchiliwa.

¹⁶Tawogrgu zuuriwa,

Ranka zuurila sarilan gua,

¹³The sons-in-law wear a strip of silk,

It is not a common strip of silk,

It was granted by three holy mountains where incense is often burned and Buddhist flags offered,

Strips of silk granted by three holy mountains where invisible dragon temples are located,

Granted by Sakyamuni.

Tied around the sons'-in-law necks,

All propitiousness will come.

¹⁴White sandalwood table,

Red sandalwood tray,

Bread on the tray,

Precious objects granted by Buddha.

¹⁵Coins are put on the tray,

They are not common coins,

Add a bowl of liquor,

Symbolizing money and silver pouring into the home.

¹⁶Jujubes on the tray,

Are uncommon jujubes,

Durasi yighara tiidisa,
Mula sla rjeelegu shdanchiliwa.

Add a bowl of liquor,
Symbolizing children and
grandchildren filling the room.

¹⁷Tawogrgu ghuasiwa,
Ranka ghuasila sarilan gua,
Kurigeenni daliira dalasa,
Huni npeelagu shdanchiliwa.

¹⁷Wool on the tray,
Is uncommon wool,
Put on the sons'-in-law shoulders,
Symbolizing sheep filling the fold.

¹⁸Tawogrgu qighaan tuusiwa,
Ranka qighaan tuusila sarilan
gua,
Kurigeenni mangliirni moka
ghuasa,
Musi npeelagu shdanchiliwa.

¹⁸Butter on the tray,
Is uncommon butter,

Smeared on the sons'-in-law
foreheads,
Symbolizing yaks filling the pen.

¹⁹Tawogrgu taraawa,
Ramka taraala sarilan gua,
Dirii sajisa,
Taraa tuusi yolagu shdanchiliwa.

¹⁹Grain on the tray,
Is uncommon grain,
Cast here,
Symbolizing grain-oil filling the
storehouse.

²⁰Tawogrgu xuguawa,
Ranka xuguala sarilan gua,
Yerishdi lii huujiin xuguawa,

Rgulidi lii xrilajin xuguawa,

Nughuunla sojin xuguawa,
Xugua raligha rjeelesa,

²⁰Cypress on the tray,
Is uncommon cypress,
Cypress that does not dry in
summer,
Cypress that does not yellow in
winter,
Eternally green cypress,
Cypress twigs densely growing,

Kurigeenni qinsang rjeelen ju.

Symbolizing prospering
sons'-in-law families.

²¹Xugua durishdiji wusisa,
Kurigeenni qinsang bayanjan ju,

²¹Cypress grows tall,
Symbolizing wealthy sons'-in-law
families,

Xugua szariba warisa,
Kurigeenni qinsang shdalan ju.

Cypress will take root,
Symbolizing prospering
sons'-in-law families.

²²Yighara giisan nengi szu,
Ranka szungi puxii ju,
Xodangrni xoquuwa·
Kalayiini kaxuuwa,
Lasajuni baquuwa.

²²Water poured into the bowl,
Is uncommon water,
Water from the eagle-owl's mouth,
Water from the swallow's mouth,
Water from Lasaju Temple's
treasure bottle.

²³Yighara giisan nengi sun,
Ranka sungi puxii ju,
Qighaan sngani sunna,
Qighaan hunini sunna,
Qighaan musini sunna,
Szu da sunni niilasa,
Qighaan qughuridi furaxja.

²³Milk poured in a bowl,
Is uncommon milk,
Milk of white lions,
Milk of white sheep,
Milk of white yaks,
Milk and water mixed,
Becomes whitish milky water.

²⁴Turang Shdanglaqan Sangdi
qorilaya,

²⁴First, offer to Shdanglaqan
Deity,¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Shdanglaqan Deity, Warinqan Deity, and Xuulurijan Deity occupy positions in order of their decreasing importance, respectively.

Ghuaidari Waringan Sangdi qorilaya,	Second, offer to Waringan Deity,
Boji Xuulurijan Sangdi qorilaya,	Third, offer to Xuulurijan Deity,
Niuduri kurigeendi niizhini	Today we wish the sons'-in-law
nanglana ju,	lives to be happy and lucky,
Mula sla rjeelen,	Children and grandchildren will
	prosper,
Mori musi npleelan,	Horses and yaks will prosper,
Taraa tuusi yolan.	Grain and oil will be produced.
²⁵ Niuduri kurigeendi modoggi	²⁵ Today praise the sons-in-law,
pughasa,	
Yan yansada zolaji diilan ju.	To successfully achieve what you
	desire.

As the elder orated and the grooms put on new clothing, Laxja walked into the shrine courtyard from patrolling inside the Mansion with Niruu. He walked into the crowd and saw his beloved Jiraqog wearing her noble Tughuan headdress, and dressed in brightly colored clothing. She stood shyly on a piece of felt. In the morning sunshine, dressed so colorfully, she was stunningly beautiful. Her noble husband, Hgunqosirang, was busily changing his clothes.

Confronted with this scene, Laxja went cold and felt anger course through his body from head to toe. He quickly turned and left this heart-breaking place. He kicked open his room in the jail courtyard, stepped inside, and slammed the door behind him. Lying on his bed, he muttered, "Great Heaven! You are so unfair! Though I am only a servant in the Mansion, why can't I marry Jiraqog? Don't I compare to Hgunqosirang? My position in the Mansion is still that of an obedient servant. My ancestors came here only to fill their bellies.

I don't know how long I can stay in the Mansion. Is this where I will find happiness?


The Nangsuu family had begun preparing for the wedding two months earlier. One late afternoon, Laxja had met Hgunqosirang, drunk and stumbling, in the courtyard. Seeing Laxja, Hgunqosirang had widened his eyes, pointed at him with a finger, and declared, "Don't contact Jiraqog. She will soon be my wife. If you contact her, I'll break your legs and drive you from the Mansion."

Recalling this, Laxja leaped from his bed, took an earthen jar of liquor from the underground hole in his room, and bottomed it in one go.



27

MONK NANGSUU AVOIDS VIOLENCE

ate in the third lunar month, the weather was sunny in Wuxi Valley. The previous year at the same time, the crops had grown tall enough to hide a pigeon. This year, however, a prolonged drought had retarded the growth so that the crops were stunted and sparse. This was the time of the second irrigation in Tughuan and in the lower reaches of the Wuxi River.

Tughuan Village was located in the middle of the Wuxi Valley. The Wuxi River flowed north to south from the foot of the Durizang Mountains where it flowed out of Wuxi Valley and into the Xranghuali River. This year, the drought had greatly reduced the river flow.

Starting from Tughuan Village, the fields of all the villages located in the lower reaches of the Wuxi River needed irrigation twice a year. The first irrigation was at the time of the first frost. It was also called the winter irrigation and took place between the ninth to the middle of the tenth lunar months. If certain fields weren't successfully irrigated during winter, they had to be irrigated when the crops sprouted the next year. The second irrigation took place when the green crops were tall enough to hide a pigeon. This occurred annually between the twentieth day of the third lunar month and the first day of the fourth lunar month.

The village fields in the upper regions were not irrigated because of the high altitude and cold climate.

The limited water for irrigation caused panic. Tughuan Village occupied the most advantageous position in terms of access to irrigation water. Every year, Tughuan Village was the first to be irrigated. Each village was allowed to irrigate for two days and two nights. This year, owing to the drought, Tughuan Village didn't finish their irrigation as required and continued to irrigate on the third day, failing to release the water to the villages below. Understandably, those villagers were angry. They urgently required irrigation water. Armed with metal shovels, they came to fight Tughuan villagers.

All Tughuan villagers left their fields and quickly marched to the Xaxi Taigai area to gather stones and wait there with their slingshots ready. Immediately, the sky was littered with stones. As the two opposing armies



clashed, the sounds of shouting and banging shovels mixed together as though the earth was spinning faster. Very soon some men were lying unconscious on the stone-covered ground.

Monk Nangsuu sat on his white felt mat in his upper courtyard, draped in a dark-red robe. He sat drinking and smoking while his second wife, Sishihua, added manure to the small garden plot at the courtyard center. The old peony had turned green. Its branches and leaves were flourishing and buds had formed. The round plot was extremely smooth and white after Monk Nangsuu had smeared it with loess just some days before the peony buds started to open. Every year at this time, Monk Nangsuu himself covered the plot

with white soil.

This idyllic scene was suddenly interrupted by a loud bang. The courtyard door flew open as Rnqan and Niruu rushed forward shouting, "Lord, come quickly! There's fighting over the water rights in front of Tughuan Village. Our side is outnumbered. Some Tughuan villagers have already been beaten to the ground by people from the lower villages!"

Monk Nangsuu stood up immediately and put his arms inside the sleeves of his robe. He picked up the earthen jar, poured some liquor, and beseeched, "Xuanglang Liuya and Gunbuquxjang deities! Help me!" and then he rushed out the door. He raced to the battlefield with Niruu and Rnqan behind him.

Grey and white clouds covered the sky. Only a few sunrays shone directly on the stony riverbank where the two sides were furiously fighting.

"Kill them! Kill them!" shouted Monk Nangsuu as he ran down the slope to the riverbank. His shouts were so loud that all of the warriors were shocked. Having stopped fighting to look at the source of the shouting they beheld a gigantic man in a red robe seemingly descending from Heaven. His dark-red robe appeared to be floating in the sky.


Soon, the dark-red robed gigantic man became two, three and four... until a host of dark-red robed men were descending from Heaven and racing at them. Dumfounded, the men of the lower reaches began slowly retreating when suddenly one shouted, "Run fast! We have enraged Great Heaven! It's our mistake! Run!" and they turned and fled in all directions.

The Tughuan side had won.

Later, they learned that Xuanglang Liuya and Gunbuquxjang deities had helped Monk Nangsuu win the fight after he had beseeched them before rushing to the battlefield. The two deities had then created the illusion of hundreds of giants descending from Heaven, frightening away the other side.

28

LAYINSUU GIVES BIRTH

ayinsuu was pregnant. Everyone inside the Mansion and all the Tughuan villagers soon learned of this. The women and girls were keenly interested in Layinsuu's pregnancy. Observing her abdomen becoming ever larger, those curious women had even calculated Layinsuu's expected date of confinement.

Zanan and Wuxihua were delighted to learn that Layinsuu was pregnant. This childless couple would now soon have a child, a grandson they hoped. One day, they invited a passing Chinese soothsayer to tell them whether Layinsuu was pregnant with a boy or girl. After asking Layinsuu's age, and her anticipated time of delivery, he calculated on his fingers and declared Layinsuu would bear a son. The couple was very pleased and paid the soothsayer handsomely with silver.

Layinsuu's belly grew ever larger. One morning, Wuxihua stood by the doorway and watched Layinsuu's feet as she was about to enter through the front gate carrying a basket of wheat straw on her right shoulder. Wuxihua was very happy when Layinsuu's right foot stepped first over the threshold because it signified the child would be a boy. If it had been the left foot, it would have been a girl. Wuxihua believed that a son lies on the left side of the womb and a daughter on the right. Accordingly, if the left side is heavy the mother instinctively raised her right foot when stepping upwards.

Wuxihua raced back to her room and relayed this good news to her husband. Zanan jumped about joyfully, hoping Layinsuu would soon give birth to his grandson.

At that moment Limusairang came in and seeing Zanan and Wuxihua jumping about asked, "Elder Father and Elder Mother, why are you two so happy today?"

"How can we be unhappy? Your wife is pregnant with a baby boy. You will have a son and we two will have a grandson," replied Zanan excitedly.

"I don't feel happy at all," confessed Limusairang, turning around, about to leave.

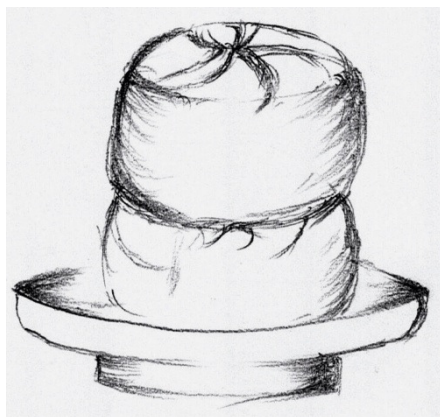
"Why aren't you happy? Tell me!" Zanan shouted.

"Don't you two know? Is the baby in her belly even mine? I don't think so. It must be from a wild seed," declared Limusairang angrily and turning back, walked out quickly.

"Shut up!" Wuxihua shouted at Limusairang and cried sadly.

"Do you believe what he is saying?" inquired Zanan.

"It is probably true. I helped tie Layinsuu's embroidered sash at her wedding ceremony. My hand touched her belly, which was already larger. I thought I had touched a hard thing in her belly. I didn't immediately suspect that she was already pregnant. I didn't pay much attention to Layinsuu's belly," Wuxihua replied, still sobbing.



"It might be Lasizisirang's baby because Layinsuu had a close connection with him. They often met secretly and deeply loved each other," continued Wuxihua.

"Whatever! We don't care who the father is! Layinsuu and Limusairang have already married. The boy will be ours. We won't mention this to others. I'll manage Limusairang so that he will love his wife and not be angry with this baby," Zanan said firmly.

"I agree. We are childless. Not having a child, particularly having no son, means having no stake in the Mansion and the society we live in. I have a lonely life. It is not been easy for a barren woman like me to make friends. The condition of a childless woman is pitiable. I was always despondent and dejected and lived out a

miserable existence," Wuxihua said sadly, recalling her childless life before adopting Layinsuu.

"Even if the baby is not Limusairang's, it is much better than not having a grandson, regardless of whether Limusairang is going to love Layinsuu and their future son," Zanan continued.

"You know that Mamadii's wife, Srinsuu, and I are both childless. We have both lost our spirit, while Hgunqog and his wife, Layajii, have four sons. This has made Layajii arrogant. She has a happy family and a higher social position than Srinsuu and me. Even Monk Nangsuu's mother, Srangsuu, treats us differently. When she doles out the cloth, embroidery thread, and sewing needles, she gives more to Layajii than to Srinsuu and me. Her pretext is that Layajii has more children, while Srinsuu and I have none. There is even gossip in the Mansion and Tughuan Village that Srinsuu and I are childless because of the sins of our parents in previous incarnations," Wuxihua sobbed.

Late that night, Layinsuu lay in bed, touched her big belly, and congratulated herself that she would soon be a mother. Limusairang didn't seem to love her very much and ignored her pregnancy. He often went outside to drink and gamble and scolded her for little reason. She felt he didn't love her.

At this moment, the door opened and Limusairang, came in, drunk.

"Are you drunk again?" Layinsuu asked.

Limusairang opened his eyes wide, glared at Layinsuu and declared loudly, "Of course!"

"Can't you stop drinking? I'm pregnant and will give birth soon. Everyone thinks it will be a boy. We should take good care of this treasure," pleaded Layinsuu.

"That's not my business, it's your business," Limusairang snapped.

"What do you mean? Don't you love this unborn child? You are unreasonable!" protested Layinsuu.

"Am I the baby's father? Your heart is crystal clear!"

Limusairang growled at Layinsuu.

Layinsuu cried out loudly.

Zanan rushed into the room and, without a word, hit Limusairang with a horsewhip, and then scolded, "What a lot of trouble you are! Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion will be destroyed by black sheep such as you!"

Limusairang rushed to the courtyard where he ran around a small garden plot with Zanan in pursuit, continuing to whip him.

About a month later, late one afternoon, Layinsuu gave birth to a boy with the assistance of a widow from the village. Wuxihua believed childbirth with the help of a widowed midwife went more smoothly and was less painful.

It was now taboo for men to enter. Zanan immediately went outside and hung a ball of sheep's wool from the top left of the Mansion's front gate, signifying a boy had been born. Outsiders were thus prohibited from entering for one month, at which time the ball would be removed. This taboo applied not only to the room occupied by Layinsuu and the baby but to the whole courtyard and contact with the whole family. During this month, Layinsuu ate mostly thin gruel made from highland barley.¹⁶⁵ All her food was without salt. She was confined to her room, leaving only to go to the toilet, which was mostly at night once it was dark. She did not go outside to the courtyard to do housework and she was forbidden to touch religious objects. The period of confinement was twenty-nine days after the birth of a boy and thirty days for a girl.

Every three days, Layinsuu washed with water that had been mixed with cypress twigs and washed her baby boy with water that prickly ash had been soaked in. She put a small pillow stuffed with dried peas under her son's head and rubbed his head several times each day so it would grow perfectly round. She often pulled the lobes of his ears to make them grow long and pendulous. A round head, long earlobes, and small fine hands were important and attractive features for both males and females: omens of good fortune in life.

¹⁶⁵ The Mongghul term for this gruel is *yiira*.

Layinsuu took good care of her son because she appreciated that he was the first son of his generation. After maturing, he would probably be the next Nangsuu.

In accordance with tradition, on the twentieth day, Layinsuu shaved her baby son's head.

Twenty-nine days after the child's birth and at Wuxihua's insistence, Limusairang reluctantly went to Monk Nangsuu's living yard with an earthen jar of liquor, a strip of silk, and 200 copper coins strung on a red cord attached to a bunch of sheep's wool. He prostrated three times to his baby son's great-grandfather and invited him to name the child. In a similar manner, he went to see Zanan, one of the baby's grandfathers and invited him to name the child. He then invited his own father Hgunqog, Mamadii, and other elder relatives to the *pei* of the Mansion where the baby's naming ceremony would soon be held.

Monk Nangsuu and Zanan were seated on the *pei* in all their finery, with the whole family gathered in the room. Standing before Monk Nangsuu and Zanan with Limusairang at her side, Layinsuu cradled her baby son in her arms, her eyes wet with tears. Limusairang offered a strip of silk to Monk Nangsuu and Zanan and then presented each with three cups of liquor. Finally, Layinsuu and Limusairang prostrated three times before them. Layinsuu next asked Monk Nangsuu to bestow an auspicious name on the baby. This was the first time that Monk Nangsuu and Zanan had seen the baby since his birth.

Holding the baby, Monk Nangsuu looked at him carefully and then exclaimed, "What a lovely boy! Look after him well! Layinsuu please take great care to ensure his head is round. He is the first son of his generation. A member of the new generation has come to our Mansion. This has brought new happiness! He will be a new link in the ancestral chain and will offer sacrifices to our ancestors."

Layinsuu promised, nodding her head.

Monk Nangsuu looked at Zanan, gently handed the baby to him, and said, "You are his grandfather. It's your responsibility to

name your grandson, please."

Zanan awkwardly said, "No, you are Nangsuu and the baby boy's great-grandfather. Please give him an auspicious name."

After more respectful urging and declining, Zanan announced, "Now I declare the baby name to be Gunbuniruu."

Monk Nangsuu and others were satisfied with this name. Niruu is "treasure" while Gunbu was from the Mansion's deity - Gunbuquxjang. The deity would thus protect this "treasure" and ensure his happy future.

Both Monk Nangsuu and Zanan gave Layinsuu a few copper coins.

After Zanan kissed Gunbuniruu, the baby was passed to all other members of the family, who held him joyfully, congratulating Layinsuu and Limusairang.

Gunbuniruu's birth brought great happiness to the Mansion and was also great news and an exciting event for all Tughuan villagers and all Tughuan Nangsuu's subjects. To celebrate this wonderful event, the young men wanted to hold a feast in the village. Following elaborate planning, a merry celebration was held a day after the ball of sheep's wool had been removed from the front gate. A group of the youngest men led a yellow cow into Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. The cow's horns had been painted red and decorated with flower patterns. She wore a fine saddle fastened to a new piece of white felt; a big red painted copper bell hung around her neck.

Several young men invited Gunbuniruu's grandfather, Zanan, to come out from his room to the doorway where people had already gathered, waiting for the celebration to begin.

Zanan knew that the villagers would put him on the cow to celebrate the birth of his grandson. He was reluctant, but the village merry-makers persuaded him and he was then led into the courtyard. The young men helped Zanan up onto the white felt saddle and put Gunbuniruu in his arms. Then the cow was led in triumph through the village. A couple of men walked in front leading the cow with a rope while others supported Zanan on either side. Some other men

followed behind, prodding the cow with sticks.

Onlookers laughed. The cow was so frightened that she tried to walk in all directions, making the bell to jingle constantly. At the head of the procession, some participants carried four high banners from the village temple while others beat a large drum and struck gongs. All the participants followed the cow and its riders.

Finally, they arrived at the Mansion where Zanan and his family members entertained the participants with mutton, roasted highland barley flour, butter, noodles, and liquor from big earthen jars. The youths gathered and drank, ate, sang, played finger games, and made merry to celebrate the birth of this precious baby son, Gunbuniruu, and the Nangsuu family.

Up to this point, everyone in the village had taken part in the merrymaking celebration, except for the herdsmen outside the village. However, according to custom the herdsmen could not be overlooked. When the sun was low in the western sky, Zanan went to a herding place on the side of a road not far from Tughuan Village. As previously agreed, Wuxihua, Layinsuu, and Gunbuniruu came with him. Limusairang made various excuses and did not go.

The shepherds and herdsmen welcomed them. Zanan had brought a bottle of liquor, and twelve bread buns of which eight had been given to passersby he met on the way to the pasture. He gave the bottle of liquor and the remaining four buns to the shepherds and some copper coins as gifts to each.

The shepherds had woven a long sash as white as snow from sheep's wool for the new little guest, Gunbuniruu. They also gently placed several copper coins on Layinsuu's breasts that were swollen with milk and as white as steamed buns. This signified that her breasts would produce abundant milk so that the baby would grow up strong and quickly. They crowded around to see Gunbuniruu, and with their rough, calloused hands patted his soft cheeks, held his little fingers, and teased him, urging him to open his eyes and smile.

Congratulating Layinsuu, the shepherds also presented her with a small bundle of the whitest wool announcing:

<p>Ne nghuasini kidi jong lalang, lamanqan hunini nurirasani hurasanii. Budahgi qini bulai saighangi shgediji, nansa huina kidi janggi hunini nguasiniini awu shdaji, kidi jang morini funi shdanji, batiri tigii adalgi lankiji bayarilanii. Nansa huina ne bulai Tughuan Nangsuu Rguandi shge huawungi chinlangiji muulanii.</p>	<p>This wool has been gathered from the backs of hundreds of the youngest, most beautiful sheep. We wish that your boy will grow up healthy, will shear the wool of hundreds of sheep, and will have hundreds of horses to ride like a hero into a bright future. We wish that he will become a brave Mongghul man in the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion.</p>
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By this time, the sun had dipped behind the slopes and plains of verdant green grass where the sheep, horses, mules, oxen, and goats slowly gathered, as was their habit. They knew it was time for their masters to call them together and eventually lead them into their pens. Some ewes bleated and their lambs ran bleating to them, their little tails wagging. Once together, the mothers and lambs immediately nuzzled each other excitedly as if they were the happiest sheep in the flock.

The shepherds' sweet heartfelt words, their smiles, the teasing and laughter, and the happiness on Layinsuu's face created a simple, pastoral scene. This wonderful picture recalled past centuries when Mongghul were still completely pastoral. Many Mongghul continued to live traditional pastoral lives. Although many had adopted agricultural activities, Mongghul continued to greatly respect shepherds. All Mongghul men experienced a herding life at some point in their childhood and again later when they were adults. Many Mongghul sons became monks in monasteries or lived as shepherds.

That night, after greeting each other, Layinsuu invited the shepherds to have dinner in the Mansion. After the herds were driven to their stalls, the shepherds enjoyed a good supper and made merry all night in the Mansion.

29

LASIZISIRANG AND QIXANGSUU

ixangsuu married Lasizisirang, adding a new family member to the home. Lasizisirang's father, Limusirang, the head of the Luxuu Clan, was happy to have completed his duty of seeing his son married. The solemn, complex, and time-consuming wedding finally dropped its curtain and the home returned to its normal peaceful state.

The new bride, Qixangsuu, was short, thin, and only fourteen years old. She was five years younger than her husband, Lasizisirang, who was a tall, strong man. Their figures were in stark contrast. Qixangsuu was so young that she didn't seem to understand what marriage was. Similarly, she was nervous and fearful in the new family environment and seemed to know little about housework.

She was most fearful at bedtime when her mother-in-law, Lamukari, asked her to sleep in the bridal chamber with her husband. When asked, Qixangsuu always ran quickly to the *kang* and hid, trembling behind Lasizisirang's grandparents. Seeing the little bride like this, the grandparents felt pity and told her to sleep with them.

Lamukari felt helpless.

Lasizisirang thought it was funny when he looked at his small, childish wife. He thought of her more as a bashful younger sister than a wife and didn't much care if she slept with his grandparents. His mind was still occupied with Layinsuu. Indeed, he didn't love his wife, but was rather amused by, and pitied her.

Every night when Limusirang and Lamukari retired to their bedroom, the main topic of discussion was Qixangsuu. Under their quilts, they quarreled about and debated the "sleeping thing" between Qixangsuu and Lasizisirang.

"Everything would be fine if Lasizisirang had married his maternal uncle's daughter, Lirixjinsuu. She is a tall, strong woman, and a hard worker. Now she has married another man in another place. The relative relationship between my parents' family and our family here has been stopped. This is the fault of our son, Lasizisirang, who objected to Lirixjinsuu. Rumors have circulated that Lirixjinsuu's family was humiliated by our family because you are the head of the clan in our village. People say that because my family is wealthy while Lirixjinsuu is poor my family refused this marriage. Terrible! I feel so sad hearing these rumors," Lamukari sadly confided to her husband.

"I share your feelings but what can we do? Our son rejected their daughter. It's our fate!" sighed Limusirang.

"It probably would have been much better if we had refused Qixangsuu and looked for another woman to become our daughter-in-law," added Lamukari regretfully.

Rubbing his eyes Limusirang declared, "Impossible! Our Lord, Monk Nangsuu authorized his nephew, Zanan, to act as matchmaker and arrange the marriage between the subjects of the two clans. We cannot oppose our Lord Monk Nangsuu's order."

"Strange! Why did dear Monk Nangsuu personally try his best to arrange this marriage between these two clans? What's his real purpose?" asked Lamukari, suddenly sitting up.

Limusirang also sat up, again rubbed his dry eyes, and offered, "For them, it was a wise choice. On the one hand, they were able to end the romance between their noblewoman, Layinsuu, and the son of one of their subjects while at the same time, strengthening the relationship between their clan groups through this marriage. Certainly, our Lord has won by doing this good deed."

"Yes! That sounds right! Anyway, we cannot allow Qixangsuu and Lasizisirang to sleep separately for much longer. Tomorrow, I will force her to sleep with him in her room. Otherwise, who knows when we will hold a grandchild?" Lamukari said firmly.

Limusirang said nothing.

The following night, Lamukari walked up the wooden stairs and went into Lasizisirang's grandparents' sleeping room, which was located on the second floor of the two-story wooden building. The grandparents were sleeping. Qixangsuu lay down in the corner of the grandmother's bed platform.

"Qixangsuu, please get up and come with me. I would like to tell you something all alone," Lamukari said.

Covering her head with her robe, Qixangsuu replied, "No, I don't want to go with you. I don't want to sleep with Lasizisirang. I'm afraid. He's just like my older brother. I always slept with my grandparents in my parents' home so I want to sleep with my grandparents here too," and began nervously sobbing.

Lamukari walked forward, grabbed Qixangsuu's hand, and dragged her down the stairs.

Qixangsuu held tightly to the doorframe trying her best to walk backward from her bridal chamber as Lamukari pulled her in. Qixangsuu cried in fright, "No, I don't want to sleep here! I don't want to sleep with Older Brother Lasizisirang. I'm afraid! Please release me. Help! Help!"


Hearing this screaming, Limusirang got up and shouted from the second floor, "Lamukari, don't do it that way. Let her go! Let her sleep with us."

Lasizisirang got up from his bed and, pushing past Lamukari and Qixangsuu, left the room and went outside.

Qixangsuu then walked up the stairs, crying sadly.

30

A SPRING FESTIVAL VISIT TO TUGHUAN
NANGSUU MANSION

amukari got up early in the morning. It was a nice day. She prepared a breakfast of black tea and meat-and-potato-stuffed dumplings. Morning sunlight shone atop the towering Mansion wall. Hungry sheep bleated from the sheep pen, reminding their master to open the door and release them so they could graze in the cold pasture.

Lasizisirang's grandfather was offering morning incense in front of the small round plot in the courtyard. After lighting the incense, he and his wife, Lasizisirang's grandmother, prostrated three times, began counting their prayer beads and circumambulated the plot clockwise three times while chanting the Six Sacred Syllables.

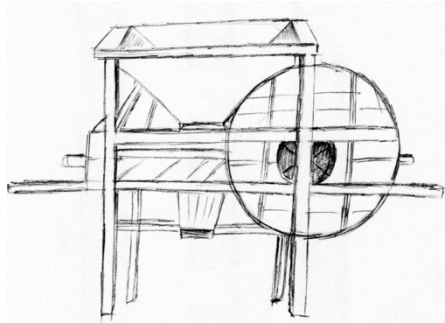
Once all the family members were seated on the *pei* in the kitchen having breakfast, Lamukari said, "This fine day is the fourteenth day of the first lunar month. Lasizisirang and Qixangsuu, will you two please make a New Year visit to our dear Lord Tughuan Nangsuu's Mansion on behalf of our Luxuu Clan? Qixangsuu, you should go with Lasizisirang to make your first visit. Monk Nangsuu and his family will be happy to see you because they were your matchmaker. It would be impolite to delay the visit. According to custom, the New Year visit should be carried out before the fifteenth day, otherwise, our Lord will be unhappy. I have already prepared gifts for you to take."

Limusirang agreed.

Lamukari assisted Qixangsuu with her clothing. She put on a gown made of fine cotton cloth, dyed violet. Long, wide extensions

were sewn onto the regular sleeves of the gown. There were three sets of sleeves, one over the other, giving the illusion that several gowns were being worn. To heighten this effect, each sleeve was slightly shorter than the one under it. The outer sleeves were made of three strips of cotton cloth colored red, yellow, and violet. Each of the strips was separated from the other by narrow bands of different colored cotton cloth.

Complementing the outfit, Qixangsuu wore a red embroidered collar, a pair of dark blue trousers, red stockings, and embroidered shoes. The new clothes were loose and long on her thin, short body. Lamukari asked Qixangsuu to stand on a square table so she could adjust the clothes, which she pulled and folded up, and then tied in place with an embroidered sash.



Qixangsuu wore a great brand-new headdress, also known as a "winnowing basket," owing to the small winnowing basket at the top. Red tassels hung from the front of her headdress while fringes of red thread dangled from the sides. Pieces of porcelain and one row of shell and coral pieces were at the front, in the mid-section of the headdress. At the back were eight movable copper plates, which were removed when the headdress was worn at home. In the middle of these eight plates were a small shield and spear, from which hung red threads. Under the shield was a small crescent-shaped cushion covered with black yak hair. It was regarded as the heart of the hair and was held by ribbons that went around her head. Lamukari put some hemp oil on this cushion to make it shiny.

This complex, heavy headdress was somewhat unstable on Qixangsuu's small head.

Lasizisirang helped Qixangsuu mount her horse. He also mounted a horse with a woolen bag of gifts placed behind him. The

two left, heading east.

Under the bright blue sky, in the crisp dry air and with sunshine sparkling on the yellow loess earth, the adobe houses in this area appeared monotonous and depressing. As they rode their horses through this bleak land, Qixangsuu and Lasizisirang's colorful, even garish costumes brought wonderful vitality and happiness to the frigid, long winter days in the Seven Valleys areas.

At noon, the two rode through Foori Valley along a path with towering cliffs on both sides that progressively narrowed. There were many up and down sections at the bottom of the gully. Riding along this path made them tremble with fear.

Having heard of robbers in the gully, Lasizisirang urged, "Hurry a little! Robbers lurk here!"

"I'm afraid, Older Brother!" Qixangsuu squealed.

"Don't call me Older Brother, just use my name! Otherwise, others will mock you!" advised Lasizisirang. He dismounted, helped Qixangsuu dismount, and then put her on his horse while transferring the woolen bag to her horse. He then leaped onto the horse behind Qixangsuu and they rode on. Turning right after riding out from the deep gully, they soon reached Tughuan Village and approached the Mansion where Layinsuu, Jiraqog, Laxja, and others welcomed them warmly.

Seeing the tall, strong Lasizisirang with his short, scrawny bride wearing a wide, loose gown that dragged on the ground, everybody considered the couple poorly matched and felt puzzled. This was particularly true for Layinsuu, who, seeing her sweetheart with this short skinny wife, had to cover her mouth with her sleeve in order to not laugh out loud.

Lasizisirang and Layinsuu were very happy to see each other. Layinsuu and Jiraqog had already begun wearing their three-pronged, pasteboard-fork noble headdress, signaling they were married. Lasizisirang felt upset and angry with himself.

After placing their gifts on the chest in the main room, Lasizisirang and Qixangsuu prostrated three times facing the back

wall of the main room. They were then invited to have a meal on the *pei*. Lasizisirang was soon drinking and chatting with Monk Nangsuu and others.

Monk Nangsuu offered Qixangsuu several copper coins to mark her first New Year as a wife, and asked, "Qixangsuu were you afraid as you rode through Foori Gully today?"

Qixangsuu approached, took the copper coins from Monk Nangsuu, and said, "It was dreadful passing through the deep gully. Older Brother Lasizisirang accompanied me, so I wasn't afraid!"

Hearing Qixangsuu call her husband "Older Brother," everyone immediately burst out laughing.

Lasizisirang blushed and told Qixangsuu, "Go have a look around the Mansion, please! The walls are magnificent!"

"Why are you all laughing? He is like my elder brother," declared Qixangsuu, now embarrassed.

Layinsuu and Jiraqog took Qixangsuu outside.

"Qixangsuu is so childish!" Monk Nangsuu confided to Lasizisirang. Though he smiled, Lasizisirang was very embarrassed.

Seeing Qixangsuu was tired and sweaty, Layinsuu helped her remove the eight movable copper plates from her back and then asked her to stand on a table. Layinsuu untied her sash and then lifted Qixangsuu's pants up higher and took off the sash.

"Thank you, Elder Sister, for your help," said Qixangsuu appreciatively.


That night, Qixangsuu slept with Layinsuu and her son, Gunbuniruu. They happily talked, played with the mischievous little boy, and shared heartfelt words. Layinsuu liked Qixangsuu because she was her beloved man's wife. She counseled Qixangsuu, "Don't call Lasizisirang "Older Brother," especially in public. He is your husband and you should sleep with him. Do what a couple should do. You are a woman and need to have children, particularly a son, otherwise, Lasizisirang's family will denigrate you. Having a son bestows status and gives you a position in his family."

Qixangsuu learned much that night from Layinsuu.

31

THE TUGHUAN VILLAGE *BOG*¹⁶⁶

CAPTURES GUNBUNIRUU'S SPIRIT

t was the third day of the fifth lunar month and it was green everywhere in the Seven Valleys. The crops had ripened. Flax and rape flowers bloomed brightly. Melodious love songs rose from the fields where women weeded, from the grasslands where shepherds herded, and along the roads, pleasing travelers.

In the village temple, Monk Nangsuu, the village temple caretaker, the crop protectors, and other elders warmly welcomed five *bog* performers from Xanjang Village,¹⁶⁷ Haliqi.

Of the five, the leader¹⁶⁸ was the oldest. The other four were his students. Two were his sons and two, his nephews. The *bog* performers were offered a meal soon after their arrival and then spent the day cutting and printing papers to be used during the temple ritual. There were two types of papers. One consisted of rectangular banners that were hung on the walls of the main hall, above the front gate, and on the walls of the temple courtyard. These were cut in patterns to resemble deer, dragons, lions, vases, and lotuses. These papers festooned the temple with bright colors and a festive environment delighting both human and non-human ritual participants. The second were long thin banners typically painted with symmetrical geometrical patterns and with relatively simple

¹⁶⁶ In this chapter, I have integrated some of the *bog* ritual description from Limusishiden and Roche (2016:35-74).

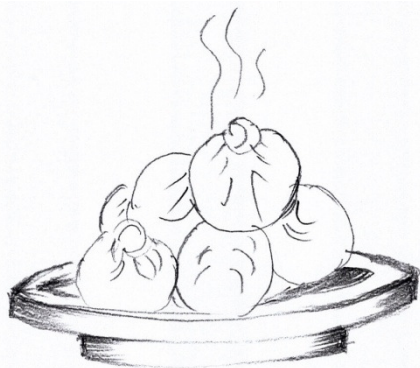
¹⁶⁷ Today's Shancheng Village, Danma Town.

¹⁶⁸ The leader was called *wanshan*.

designs. All the long thin banners were hung on a pole¹⁶⁹ that was put up in the center of the temple yard. Decorating the pole with these bright colored papers also helped created a festive environment. The pole was a bridge the deities traversed from Heaven to the temple to participate in the *bog* ritual.

The fourth day of the fifth lunar month was regarded as the Small Bog.¹⁷⁰ Early in the morning, at a time selected by the deities, some villagers and the crop protectors put up a pole in the center of the temple yard. This pole played an important role in the *bog* ritual. The sixty centimeters at the bottom of the pole represented the King of Hell, who was also invited to attend.

Nine small triangular banners of red paper were attached to the top of the pole, representing the Ninth Heaven Goddess.¹⁷¹ Under the nine banners was a ring edged with colorful papers, representing the South Sky Gate.¹⁷² All the deities passed here on their way from Heaven to the temple. Above the South Sky Gate, attached to the pole,



was a two-pronged wooden fork where two steamed buns were stuck. Villagers who had been unable to have a child, scrambled for those buns when the pole was lowered at the ritual's conclusion, believing if one got and ate the buns the chances of conceiving improved. A hemp rope was tied from the top of the pole to the main column of the temple's main hall. After entering through the South Sky Gate, all the attending deities traveled along this rope, and later also departed along it. Three small banners were attached to the rope near where it

¹⁶⁹ *Fan* refers to the same name as the papers.

¹⁷⁰ Mula Bog.

¹⁷¹ Jiutian Shengmu.

¹⁷² Niantianmen.

joined the pole. The top one represented Buddhism, the middle one Daoism, and the lowest one the deities.

The female deities' sedans were put on a long table in front of which stood a square table where steamed buns, butter lamps, incense sticks, strings of cloth and, later, a pig carcass were all displayed as offerings.

After breakfast, the *bog* performers returned to the temple to invite the deities.¹⁷³ They beat their drums and chanted the "Scripture of the Three Religions" – first Buddhism followed by Daoism, and finally the deities. They invited each of many deities by name, and asked them to join a banquet in the main hall of the temple:

We have lit incense sticks on twelve large incense burners and twelve small burners. We have opened all the doors for you. Thousands of people are lighting incense sticks and hundreds of thousands of people are now prostrating to you. All of you please descend and sit on your thrones.

After resting, the *bog* players, the female deities, the temple caretaker, the crop protectors, and selected village men went to a household that would offer a pig to the deities during the ritual. The *bog* performers chanted scriptures and beat drums, while the crop protectors and village men lit incense and prostrated in the four directions in the visited courtyard. Later, the entire pig carcass was moved to the temple and put in front of the Tughuan female deities, with its head facing the main hall.

Villagers came to light and offer incense and prostrate to the female deities. Monk Nangsuu and Zanan came with Gunbuniruu, who was now old enough to walk by himself. Zanan led him under the pole and rubbed his head with the hung papers to purify his body in the hope he would grow up safely. Afterward, Gunbuniruu played

¹⁷³ Qingshengjing.

with some other boys in the courtyard and curiously watched the *bog* performers dance and sing.

After lunch, the *bog* performers conducted a ritual to invite Happy Goddess,¹⁷⁴ who had to be invited separately from the other deities. The temple caretaker's head was bound with a piece of red cloth and a model bow and arrow was put on his back. He held a box filled with wheat seeds into which was inserted a red "Happy Goddess flag"¹⁷⁵ made of colorful paper and triangular in shape. Then the temple caretaker, all the *bog* performers, the two female deities, the crop protectors, and some village men went into the temple courtyard. The Tughuan female deities indicated the direction where Happy Goddess was. Having determined the direction, the *bog* performers asked the temple caretaker to kneel, facing in that direction. Everyone else did the same. The *bog* performers once again beat drums and chanted:

Now we know where you, dear Happy Goddess, are located. The two female deities have personally come out to receive you. Please come to our temple and join the other deities for a banquet now

After chanting and beating the drum to invite Happy Goddess, they returned to the temple courtyard. The *bog* performers scattered wheat seeds in the courtyard leading to the main hall, signifying the propitious presence of Happy Goddess who was then invited to sit in the seat of honor, beside the Tughuan female deities inside the main hall.

At about eight in the evening, the *bog* performers returned to the temple to invite the villagers' ancestors' souls to the *bog*. It was already dark outside. The crop protectors lit a fire in front of the temple courtyard gate, where three *bog* performers performed. Meanwhile, at least one representative from each village household

¹⁷⁴ Xishen Niangniang.

¹⁷⁵ Xishengqi.

came to kneel, kowtow, and burn yellow paper for their ancestors' souls. During this time, the *bog* performers chanted:

Souls, please come! Souls, please come! Please walk to the gate of the temple. Temple guardians,¹⁷⁶ please ask all the souls to enter through the front gate. All souls, please prostrate to the pole first and then prostrate to the deities who have already arrived. Please then take your seat outside the main temple hall. Please sit in your arranged seats.

All the deity guests had now assembled. The Tughuan female deities sat in the seat of honor. Happy Goddess sat by them, flanked by numerous other deities. They were treated with steamed buns, pork, fruit, grain, and liquor. Deceased villagers' souls were arranged according to age and rank and offered white steamed buns near burning butter lamps.

In order to empower and delight the guests of honor and the temple's female deities, the Catching Spirits' Ritual¹⁷⁷ was performed. The *bog* performers, the female deities, the temple caretaker, the crop protectors, and certain village men performed this rite secretly. This was because the intention was to capture ghosts to sacrifice to the deities. However, the wandering, disembodied spirit of a living person might be accidentally caught, which could lead to illness and even death. For this reason, preparations were made in secret, and the rite was carried out under the cover of darkness. The rite of Catching Spirits was held in conjunction with *bog* once every three years.

The *bog* leader and the female deities directed the participants. Without forewarning, the participants were suddenly summoned to the temple at a time previously determined by the

¹⁷⁶ Temples in the Seven Valleys had two guardian deities that were sentries at the gate of the temple. Certain temples may feature such deities painted in the portico.

¹⁷⁷ *Chubing shoubing* 'disperse and bring back soldiers'. Here, the "soldiers" are the *bog* performers who go and catch spirits and then return.

female deities. When all participants had gathered at the temple gate, they soon set off in a direction again determined by the female deities.

The female deities were followed by the five *bog* performers, several crop protectors, and some villagers who carried ritual paraphernalia. Big Female Deity repeatedly rushed forward, paused briefly, turned, lurched, and sped off in another direction. Following the Deity, people went to a small wood behind the temple. Everyone was quiet. The *bog* performer asked the Deity where the spirits should be caught. The Deity moved back and forth repeatedly, and then suddenly stood still, signifying that a site for catching spirits had been chosen.

At this time a *bog* performer asked a crop protector to bring nine incense sticks. The crop protector then made a pile of straw which he lit some distance away from the *bog* performers. He lit the nine incense sticks from the fire and handed them to the *bog* performer, who knelt facing south. The Deity stood just behind the *bog* performer.

A *bog* performer inserted the nine incense sticks into an open bottle, which was placed in the wooden box. The performer then asked a man to toss jujubes and candies in the four directions to lure wandering spirits. Next, the *bog* performer stood and began circling the bottle slowly, waving a paper banner and murmuring, using forceful language to threaten the wandering spirits so that they would enter the bottle. He walked clockwise at first, suddenly changed to a counterclockwise direction, and then changed directions again. Sometimes, he briefly paused.

At this tense moment, the *bog* leader advised, "*Bog* performers, pound your drums!"

The other *bog* performers began beating their drums and chanting while the *bog* leader cracked a hemp whip in the air, further scaring the wandering spirits. The players beating the drums walked near the bottle.

At this point, one *bog* performer called for the rooster's neck to be broken. The rooster soon lay jerking on the ground where it had been tossed. Three *bog* performers circled the bottle, beating drums, repeatedly extending and retracting their arms. Having enticed wandering spirits with the jujubes and candies, the loud and aggressive drum pounding, the searing crack of the hemp whip, and the violent curses, a spirit was eventually forced into the bottle.

The *bog* performers suddenly called out, "Ah!" in unison, and then pounced towards the bottle, which toppled over. One performer immediately blocked the mouth of the bottle with a Qing Dynasty coin and placed a red cloth on top, which was secured by tying a hemp thread around the neck of the bottle. A coin from the imperial period was efficacious in suppressing wandering spirits and other evils because such beings found these coins unbearably heavy.

A *bog* performer then placed the bottle at the feet of the two female deities inside the temple's main hall. It was covered with two wooden boxes until, on the following night, the *bog* performers would transfer the spirits into the female deities, prior to the conclusion of the ritual. Now empowered and energized by the spirits, the female deities could more effectively help the villagers.

Zanan knew the wandering, disembodied spirit of a living person might be accidentally caught during the performance of the Catching Spirits Rite and that this might lead to illness or even death. This was particularly a concern for little boys because their spirits were more easily caught. So, as a precaution, to prevent Gunbuniruu's spirit from being caught during the ritual, he told the Mansion people that night to bar the front gate early and not allow people to come and go.

Gunbuniruu was mischievous. That night, after having noodles for supper, he played with his grandparents as usual but, wanting to play a little longer, he refused when his grandfather wanted him to go to bed. At about nine PM, just before going to bed with his grandparents, he suddenly fainted and fell to the floor. His eyes were fixed and wide open, and his hands jerked spasmodically.

Shocked and frightened, Zanan immediately deduced that the *bog* had caught Gunbuniruu's spirit. After reporting this to Monk Nangsuu, they rushed to the temple, carrying Gunbuniruu. Monk Nangsuu ordered Niruu and Rnqan to bring a rooster to the temple as quickly as possible.

Seeing Monk Nangsuu and his nephew worriedly approaching the temple with the little boy, the *bog* performers, temple caretaker, and crop protectors were frightened. They realized that they had come to seek the return of the little boy's spirit that had been caught that night during the Catching Spirits Rite. They quickly brought Big Female Deity on their shoulders and asked her to return the little boy's spirit. *Bog* performers frantically pounded drums and chanted scriptures. The deity madly walked to and fro. With Gunbuniruu in his arms, Zanan knelt on the floor before the female deities.

The *bog* leader shouted, "Wring the neck of the rooster you brought from the Mansion!"

Rnqan broke the rooster's neck and threw it on the ground. The rooster twitched where it had been thrown.

"Everyone, prostrate to the deities!" the *bog* leader bellowed while beating his drum wildly.

All the Mansion residents made three prostrations to the deities.

Big Female Deity was again placed on her seat and the *bog* performers finished beating their drums and chanting.

The exhausted *bog* leader announced, "We are lucky. The boy's spirit has already been replaced by the rooster's spirit. We dealt with it promptly. If you had come later, there would have been no chance of bringing it back. The rooster sacrificed earlier did not compensate for the spirit, so that's why your little boy was caught. To further strengthen and protect your little boy's life the name of Gunbuniruu should be changed to Nengnengbog.¹⁷⁸ Don't shave his head until he's thirteen years old. Until then, he will be considered dedicated to the tutelary spirit. When Nengnengbog reaches thirteen,

¹⁷⁸ C, Niangniangbao 'Female Deity Protector'.

he will have passed successfully through the dangerous years, and will then be released from his dedication. This will require a ritual at that time because Nengnengbog should have been dedicated to the deity for all his life. On the day he turns thirteen, his head must be shaved in the temple."

When Nengnengbog returned to the Mansion, he seemed fine. He had completely recovered. Everything was again normal. Monk Nangsuu, Zanan, Layinsuu, and all the others were glad to see him well and behaving normally.

The *bog* ritual continued. The next day, everyone talked about the little boy from Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion whose spirit had been caught and promptly returned. It would have been sensational news in Seven Valleys if the boy's spirit hadn't returned. Certainly, it would have been a great loss to Nangsuu Mansion because male heirs were in short supply.

On this day, a rite of scattering grain and eggs was performed. Having been delighted with an extravagant banquet, attentive service, and much chanting, the non-human guests now reciprocated by bestowing blessings. Halfway down the rope that connected the pole to the main hall of the temple was a paper package containing a rich mixture of treats: jujubes, candies, walnuts, wheat seeds, coins, paper money, wheat flour dough, and other items. A *bog* performer had placed it there that morning. These items had been empowered by all the deities and were efficacious in guarding against misfortune and ensuring peace and prosperity, especially in protecting children from sickness.

A teeming crowd of villagers gathered in the temple courtyard for the Liangdan rite. *Bog* performers stood on the temple porch and, while they chanted and beat drums, one swung the rope, signifying the exhilaration of the gathered deities. Eventually, the paper package fell from the rope, and its contents scattered in all directions on the ground. Villagers scrambled to get these items considered to bring good luck and protection. At the same time, one of the *bog*

performers tossed candies, jujubes, and other items to the seething crowd.


At around midnight, the villagers took down the pole. They also removed all the paper, piled it up in the temple courtyard, and burned it. While the villagers burned yellow papers outside the temple the *bog* performers saw off all the invited souls by beating drums and chanting scriptures:

Seeing souls off! Seeing souls off! Please walk out of the temple gate. The temple guardians, please ask all the souls to walk out the front gate. All souls, please travel well on your return trip. See you next year at this time.

The *bog* rite ended but, before the *bog* performers left, Monk Nangsuu invited them to his Mansion where they were served a generous meal to thank them for saving his "treasure," Nengnengbog.

32

JIRAQOG SENDS OFF THE
KITCHEN GODDESS

t was the twelfth lunar month and already the year's farm work had been completed. The Mansion milled their new grain, pressed oilseeds, and slaughtered fattened hogs, sheep, and cattle with the assistance of their subjects while waiting to celebrate the New Year.

After breakfast on the twenty-third morning, Monk Nangsuu said to Sishihua, "Layinsuu already has a boy. But, although they married on the same day, Jiraqog has not had one. Please ask Jiraqog to hold the Sending off the Kitchen Goddess ritual tonight. By doing this, maybe she'll become pregnant and give birth to a child in the coming year."

Sishihua walked to Jiraqog's sleeping room. Jiraqog immediately got up putting her embroidery work aside, stepped forward, clutched Sishihua's hands welcoming her, and then asked her to sit on the edge of her sleeping platform.

Putting her right hand around Jiraqog's shoulders, Sishihua said, "How are you these days? I've come to ask you to send off the Kitchen Goddess. Please make preparations soon in order to make this year's rite a success. This is Monk Nangsuu's request. He hopes that in this way, you will have children."

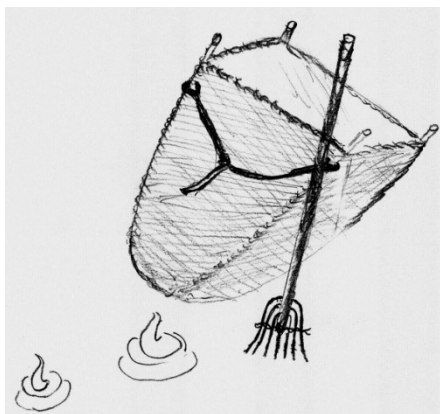
Jiraqog sadly replied, "Thank you and thank Monk Nangsuu for such kind intentions. However, how can I have a child? It's better I don't have children. My husband, Hgunqosirang, goes out every night drinking, gambling, and doing other things I know little about. He treats me like the servant I was with Mother before in the

Mansion. He doesn't like to touch me, scolds, and even beats me. He thinks that I maintain contact with Laxja and hates him so much that I dare not imagine what may happen some day, not to mention the problem of having children with Hgunqosirang."

Sishihua patted Jiraqog's shoulder and comforted, "I am sad to hear about your miserable life with Hgunqosirang. He is arrogant and spoiled because he was born into and grew up in Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. I will inform Monk Nangsuu and hope he instructs Hgunqosirang. Nevertheless, please prepare now and hold the rite tonight. The Kitchen Goddess will bless you with a child next year. Once you have a child, your life will improve."

Jiraqog nodded and promised.

The kitchen was the exclusive domain of women. Mongghul families sent the Kitchen Goddess to Great Heaven, offering steamed buns, burning incense and oil lamps, and prostrating. While the Kitchen Goddess is in Heaven, people do not consult the temple deities because all the deities go to Great Heaven for a holiday during this period. The Kitchen Goddess is gone until the early morning of the first day of the first lunar month.



That evening all the women in the Mansion donned their best clothes and adornments, while the children were clad in their New Year clothing. They knelt before a round circle smeared with white soil and sparsely scattered wheat flour on the upper part of the back wall of the kitchen room.

Jiraqog put twelve small steamed buns in front of the deity and lit an oil lamp. After incense was offered, all participants made three prostrations and then sat on the floor chanting scriptures and recalling the events of the preceding year.

When they finished, they stood and faced the Kitchen Goddess while Jiraqog said, "Kitchen Goddess, you know everything that has happened in the family during the year. You know our deficiencies and shortcomings. Please don't reveal them when you reach Great Heaven. Instead, report our pitiable living conditions, our miseries, and our afflictions. Please do not linger in Heaven for too long, but return as early as possible. We need you urgently and will wait for you early on the midnight of the thirtieth. We sincerely ask you to bring children to the daughters-in-law. Sons are preferable because there is a shortage of boys in our Mansion. Bring good health to all of us. Bring gold and silver, and blessings for all the livestock and crops for the coming year."


On the night of the thirtieth of the twelfth lunar month, no family members in the Mansion went to bed, but instead, sat together drinking, singing, and chatting. The children were also told not to go to bed in fear they would be taken away by ghosts.

At midnight, they all went outside into the passageway. The Mansion front gate had been completely opened. Niruu and Rnqan lit a big fire in the passageway. Zanan made a large incense offering. Mamadii set off firecrackers. Monk Nangsuu stood before the incense offering while others stood in lines behind him. Monk Nangsuu called out, "Kitchen Goddess! All members of Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion welcome your return from Great Heaven. Thank you for bringing children, wealth, and safety for livestock and crops with you!"

After Monk Nangsuu finished his welcome, everyone made three prostrations. Jiraqog was glad to hear the auspicious words spoken by Monk Nangsuu and was happy that she was going to have a child in the year that had already begun.

33

QIXANGSUU MISSES HER MOTHER

lthough Qixangsuu was fourteen years old when she married, she had not yet been weaned by her mother, Rnqansuu. Qixangsuu had an elder sister, Rnqaxji, and an elder brother, Galazang. Rnqaxji took part in a ritual¹⁷⁹ and then had lovers and children while continuing to live in her parents' home. Her children were unknown and unacknowledged by their fathers. They bore the mother's family clan name and were considered members of the clan.

Qixangsuu was the youngest child and had, therefore, been greatly spoiled by her parents and grandparents. She was accustomed to being breastfed by her mother.

When Qixangsuu left to marry and live in Lasizisirang's home, her mother knew her daughter would miss her because she had never weaned her. Rnqansuu also missed nursing Qixangsuu after she left.

The time came for Qixangsuu to visit her parents' home and, according to custom, stay for about ten days. Rnqansuu asked her son, Galazang, to escort Qixangsuu home for the visit.

Galazang brought Qixangsuu back to her natal home. When the two arrived and dismounted, Qixangsuu rushed in and pounced on her mother. She jerked open her mother's robe, gripped her mother's shriveled breasts tightly, and nursed madly, one breast after another until the breasts were dry. A bit later, she licked the nipples and, gazing at her mother's face said, "Mother, I missed you so much, particularly your milk."

¹⁷⁹ Tulighui juligha 'head put on' (Limusishiden and Jugui 2010:50).

Rnqansuu rubbed the back of Qixangsuu's head and answered, "I missed nursing you and I was right - you also missed your mother's milk!"

Although a satisfied smile appeared on her petite face, Qixangsuu's eyes filled with tears as she said, "Mother, I don't want to go back to their home. Lasizisirang's mother tries to force me to sleep with her son. I have refused and sleep with the grandparents."

"You're wrong. You are now a married woman. You must sleep with your husband at night. Please stop sleeping with the grandparents. When you sleep with your husband, you will have a child. You will be denigrated if you have no children. You must understand this. I want you to have a good, happy life in your husband's home," Rnqansuu instructed.

Qixangsuu sobbed hot tears that plopped on her mother's breasts and flowed down her cleavage.

Over the following ten days, Qixangsuu regularly breastfed while also assisting her mother with the housework, sewing clothes, and embroidered.

Early in the morning of the eleventh day, Rnqansuu got up and prepared to see Qixangsuu off. Before leaving, Qixangsuu lay in her mother's warm arms, and nursed, murmuring, "Mother, I will miss your breasts and milk. When I think of your breasts, I truly don't want to stay in their home, but fly to you."

Rnqansuu patted Qixangsuu and said, "I understand. Mother misses you too. I will come to see you ten days from now. I'll stand on the top of the hill behind your village. You and I can meet and talk, and you can nurse. We will meet on the Second Day of the Second Lunar Month. A grand love song festival will be held in Wuuzin at that time."

Qixangsuu nibbled at her mother's nipples and said, "Wonderful! See you then."

Galazang helped reluctant Qixangsuu mount a horse and sat behind her.

The morning of the Second Day of the Second Lunar Month soon came. Qixangsuu was glad that the date to meet her mother had arrived. Thinking about her mother's breasts and milk, she could hardly wait to see her. After breakfast, she told Lasizisirang, "Today, I am going to herd sheep."

Lasizisirang agreed.

Qixangsuu drove a flock of sheep up the hill behind the village. When she got there, she turned the sheep loose to graze on the early spring grass on the hillside. She looked to the south, hoping to see her mother coming.

The noon sunshine warmed the hillside, but cold air flew up the hill, taking away the warmth. Some hungry eagles hovered above the hollows of the hillside, waiting for prey to appear.

Suddenly, she made out a mounted dim figure at the foot of the hill to the east. Gradually, as the figure came closer along the zigzag hillside path, she was sure it was her mother.

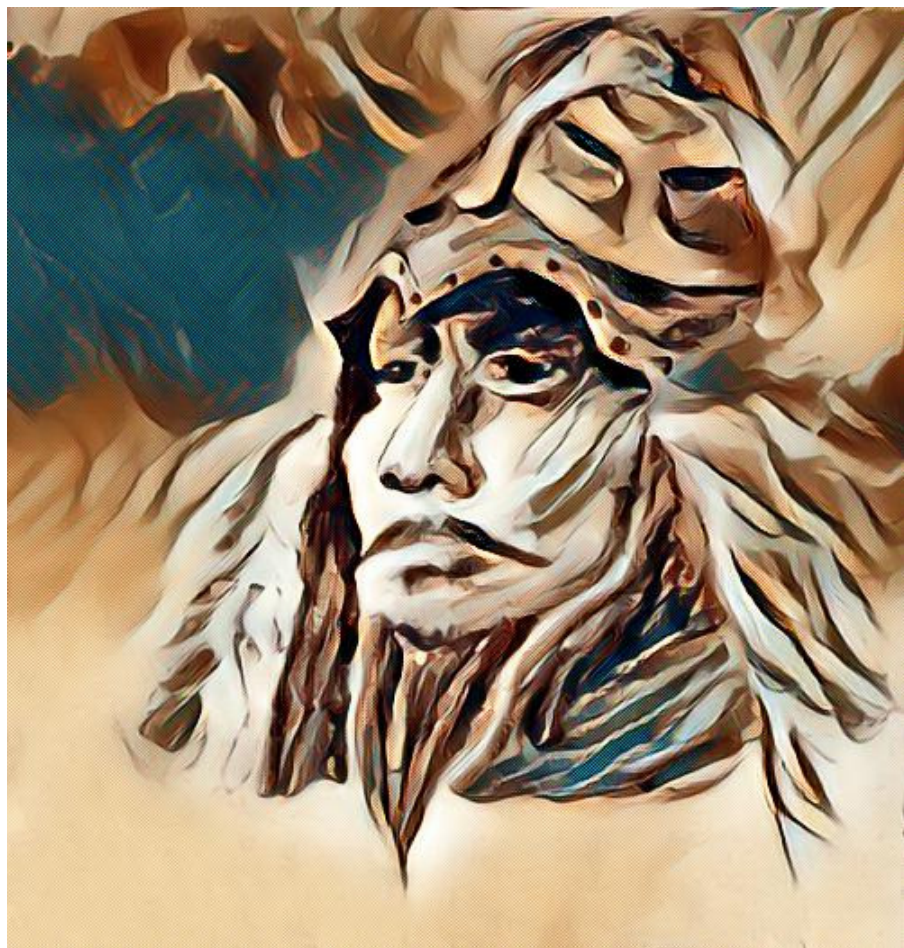
Finally, her mother appeared. Qixangsuu ran towards her as she dismounted. The two sat on the ground. Qixangsuu hungrily opened her mother's upper clothes, took out her two withered breasts, and nursed until they were dry.

"Mother, I won't think of your breasts again. It's too much to ask you to come such a long way to visit me," Qixangsuu said, her head against her mother's dear, warm breasts.

Rnqansuu smiled and said, "True. You should stop thinking about my milk. You are a married woman. People would jeer at you if they learned you were still nursing, particularly those in your husband's family and the local villagers."


Qixangsuu understood and nodded in agreement.

After a long chat, the two parted reluctantly. Rnqansuu mounted and rode down the hill in the direction of her home. Qixangsuu watched her mother go until she vanished in the distance. Then she collected her sheep and drove them towards her husband's village.



34

TRADING SISTERS

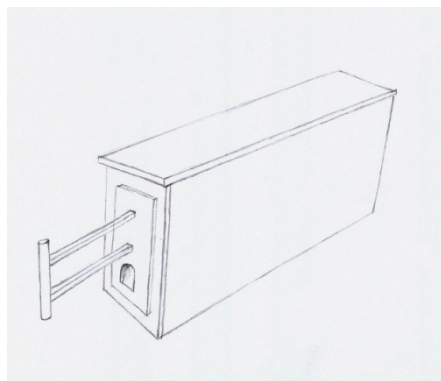
he Second Day of the Second Lunar Month's Festival was over and plowing crops had begun in the Seven Valleys. People in every family rose early to work in the fields and returned home late at night. The weather grew steadily warmer, but the cold mornings and nights still chilled hands and feet. Intermittent snow quickly melted in the late afternoon sunshine. Farmers were happy with the spring snow that made it easier to sow seed and pound the fields' big clods into bits so that the crops wouldn't be held down when they later emerged from the earth.

Lasizisirang's family members were busily plowing a sloping field. They carried ash fertilizer to the field in baskets. Although she was small, Qixangsuu also had a big basket on her back. She barely managed. As she poured the fertilizer onto the field from her basket, it seemed she might easily lose her balance and tumble over. Carrying this basket of heavy fertilizer completely exhausted her. After doing this a few times, she lay on the ground and cried.

In the evening, everyone was exhausted from the hard work. After supper, the people leaned against the wall of the *pei*, drank tea, and rested. Lasizisirang puffed on his long pipe and Qixangsuu went to bed early.

Lasizisirang's father, Limusirang, said, "Heavens! Our little daughter-in-law is truly unable to do farm work. What can we do? This seriously affects us. At this rate, our family will be the last to finish this year. Not finishing on time will delay the growth of our crops."

"It wouldn't be like this if we'd been successful in marrying my brother's daughter, Lirixjinsuu, and brought her into our home. She is strong and tall. However, Lasizisirang refused to marry her. What could we have done? Who is to blame?" mused Lasizisirang's mother, Lamukari, as she lay on wheat straw in the kitchen.



"Shush! It's too late to talk about that now!" Limusirang hollered from the *pei*.

Lamukari said no more. Lasizisirang puffed on his pipe, one bowl after another. He was embarrassed.

A while later, Lasizisirang's grandfather spoke out from a corner of the *pei*, "We should send Qixangsuu back to her parents' home for a year. Then she can return and hopefully, will have grown up a bit more and be able to do more work. Qixangsuu has an elder sister. Maybe we could ask her elder sister to come work in our home for a year while Qixangsuu is at her parents' home?"

"Is that possible?" Lasizisirang asked in surprise.

"Yes. There are such cases. Qixangsuu has married into our home but is unable to do much work because, apart from being young, she is very weak. It's now her parents' duty to ask someone from their home to come work in our home in her place," Lasizisirang's grandfather replied stoutly.

Everyone approved.

The next morning, Lasizisirang made up a story asking Qixangsuu to go to her parents' home and rest for a few days. Qixangsuu was delighted to hear this. Mounting their horses, they reached her parents' home late that afternoon.

Seeing Qixangsuu return to their home at this very busy farming time, Duriji and Rnqansuu suspected something was amiss.

Qixangsuu went to her mother's room to nurse while Duriji and Lasizisirang sat on the *pei*, drinking tea and eating bread.

"Why have you come to visit at this busy time?" inquired Duriji.

"Qixangsuu is young, weak, and unable to work hard. She cries when she falls in the field when carrying a basket full of fertilizer. My family has many fields. It seems we will be unable to finish our farm work on time this year. We have decided to ask Qixangsuu to stay one more year in your home. Then, being older, she should be able to work better. Would your family ask her elder sister to work in my home while Qixangsuu is here?" Lasizisirang suggested in obvious embarrassment.

Duriji was dumbfounded. After a long pause, he said, "How could this be? I know Qixangsuu is weak and too young to work hard," and then he left Lasizisirang on the *pei* and drove his family livestock to the village spring for water.

That evening while they were on their sleeping platform Rnqansuu asked Duriji, "You look unhappy. What's the meaning of Lasizisirang's visit? Did he tell you?"

"Lasizisirang's family is not pleased that Qixangsuu is unable to work in their fields. We know she is still young and weak. Their parents sent Lasizisirang here to ask Qixangsuu to stay in our home a year and be replaced during that time by Rnqaxji," Duriji answered.

"It's the fault of our Lord Monk Nangsuu. He urged us to give Qixangsuu to the son of the head of their Luxuu subjects as soon as possible. We had wanted Qixangsuu to stay home for a couple of more years until she had really grown up. Now, we really have a problem," Rnqansuu said angrily.

"I agree. What shall we do now? Monk Nangsuu is our Lord. We have to listen," said Duriji, sighing deeply.

"Shall we do what they suggest?" Rnqansuu asked.

"Let's ask Rnqaxji to work a year in their home. Qixangsuu can stay with us and become more mature, and also avoid being

exhausted from working in their home. Heavy work won't help her grow tall and strong," Duriji said.

Rnqansuu got up and walked to Rnqaxji's room. She knocked and was asked in.

"Mother, what brings you to see me so late in the evening?" Rnqaxji asked.

Rnqansuu sat on the *bankang*'s edge and explained the proposal that she work in Lasizisirang's home to temporarily replace Qixangsuu.

With tears running down her cheeks, Rnqaxji replied, "Mother, I see that this has upset you and Father. Since I'm an unmarried woman in our home, I must undertake this task on behalf of my family."

Moved by her daughter's agreement, warm tears of gratitude flowed down Rnqansuu's face.

The next morning, Lasizisirang and Rnqaxji mounted horses and trotted to Lasizisirang's home.

Rnqaxji immediately started farm work with Lasizisirang's family members. They were glad that she was a hard worker and was truly a great help. As a result, they finished their plowing earlier than other families in Lasizisirang's village that year.

Once the crops had grown tall, Rnqaxji weeded. Later when the crops had ripened, she harvested as well as doing threshing and making traditional fertilizer.¹⁸⁰ This was all very hard work. She also did housework, for example, cooking, sweeping, cleaning, milling flour, and pressing oil.

During this long period in Lasizisirang's home, the two worked closely together and soon, inevitably, they fell in love and eventually slept together.


The next year after the fields were plowed, Rnqaxji returned to her parents' home and Qixangsuu came to Lasizisirang's home.

A couple of months later, Rnqaxji gave birth to a baby boy who was an exact copy of Lasizisirang.

¹⁸⁰ Dangghuali xra.

35

A BAD OMEN

n the early morning of the third day of the first lunar month, a *lazii*¹⁸¹ ritual was held in Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. After the ritual, all the sheep were driven from their pen to Monk Nangsuu's personal courtyard. The yard was swept and a big incense offering was burned. Various loaves of bread that had been cooked during the New Year period were crumbled and spread across the yard and the sheep were allowed to eat well.

A sacred old ewe was led into the upper courtyard where the Mansion families fussed over it, washing its feet and wool, and devotedly combing its white wool. The sacred sheep seemed to enjoy this attention and its resulting fine appearance. After the grooming, the sacred sheep was led into Monk Nangsuu's living room. Earlier, on the back wall of the room where Gunbuquxjang Tankari had been hung, three large butter lamps burned in front of the deity. All the family members knelt on the ground and watched with feverish anxiety the chief of the Mansion, Monk Nangsuu who held a big bowl

¹⁸¹ This ritual is held in a home, clan, or village with a deity or deities. Clan members or villagers gather during the second to eighth days of the first lunar month, particularly on the third and eighth days. Early in the morning, all participants bring twelve small steamed buns and red and yellow cloths, and offer them to the deity. They set off firecrackers, light incense, prostrate to the deity, and ask the deity what they need to know about the village, household, livestock, and crops, as well as personal affairs to better prepare for the coming year. The deity tells them to visit certain *lasizi* peaks of such mountains as Chileb, Durizang, Lawaa, and Sughua on the eighth and fifteenth days of the first and second lunar months. Supplicants offer incense and prostrate in all directions at the *lasizi*. The deity may also ask that each family chant certain scriptures in the village at certain times during the Spring Festival.

of whitish milk. First, he rubbed the sheep's head, the wool on its back, and finally its limbs. Then he poured the whitish milk on the sacred sheep's head, into her ears, and onto her back. To everyone's amazement, the ewe didn't shake at all. She kept perfectly still. This was conclusive proof that Gunbuquxjang was angry and ill-disposed toward the Mansion.

Dread and terror registered on Monk Nangsuu's face. He looked at the other family members and exclaimed, "Strange! How strange! For the last few years, she has been the sacred sheep in the Mansion but has never acted this way. This year, she is so strange, acting like this, not shaking her head or body."

"Do you think the sacred sheep is too old to shake her head?" Zanan asked.

"No, she was still energetic this morning as she ate bread in the yard," noted another family member.

Everyone was dejected and looked at each other gloomily. Monk Nangsuu felt that this boded ill for the Mansion's future. All in attendance bowed their heads to the ground and lifted their hearts in humble entreaty.

After the whitish liquid had been poured out, the sheep usually shook her head and body frantically, and then the family prostrated three times, first to Gunbuquxjang Tankari and then to the sacred sheep. They would be happy, smiling, even crying with happiness.¹⁸² The sheep would then be consecrated again. Monk Nangsuu and all the family members would be in a happy mood, with a gleam in their eyes, knowing Gunbuquxjang would protect their livestock. The more frantically the sheep shook its head and body, the more auspicious was the Mansion's future. Then Monk Nangsuu and all others would attach a strip of silk to the ears of the sacred sheep and over its wool. Everybody endeavored to attach a strip of silk.

The sacred sheep would then join the flock again, and although like the other sheep she would be sheared twice a year, she

¹⁸² *Hurawa* 'the deity has happily accepted our offer'.

would never be killed but allowed to die naturally. Another sheep would then be consecrated at the following year's *lazii*.

Monk Nangsuu asked Mamadii to again pour the whitish milk. Again the sacred sheep did not shake her head. The family members despondently took the sheep out to join the flock where she munched on dry wheat stalks with the other sheep.

Hgunqog's face was cloudy and spiritless as he watched the sacred sheep leave the room and join the flock in the courtyard. He mused, "This predicament is probably of our own making. Have we been remiss in honoring Gunbuquxjang? Maybe Gunbuquxjang doesn't like the discord and resentment reigning in the Mansion. Does Gunbuquxjang want a more valuable sacrifice? Perhaps there is something big and troublesome that Gunbuquxjang can't figure out."

Hearing Hgunqog's remarks, Monk Nangsuu said, "You could be right. Shall we go ask Xuanglang Liuya? Maybe she will reveal the real reason."

All male members moved to the shrine courtyard. After offering butter lamps to Xuanglang Liuya and prostrating three times they carried the deity down into the courtyard where they asked questions.

Monk Nangsuu began, "Dear Xuanglang, you are our Mansion's deity. Please tell us how to deal with this new problem. It's strange that the Mansion's sacred sheep didn't shake her head and body at this morning's *lazii*. This phenomenon has never happened here before. Is there something inauspicious in the Mansion's future? Will some disaster befall the livestock this coming year? We worry that misfortune may befall our Mansion members."

Xuanglang Liuya in her sedan, walked backward, signifying a negative response.

"Will disaster befall the Mansion crops this coming year?" continued Monk Nangsuu.

The sedaned deity again walked backward.

"Do some Tughuan Nangsuu subjects want to separate from Nangsuu? Is there some conflict between groups of subjects?" further enquired Monk Nangsuu.

Again, the sedaned deity walked backward.

"Will some disaster befall family members?" persisted Monk Nangsuu.

Suddenly the sedaned deity walked forward, signifying "Yes."

"Thank you! So, you mean Mansion inhabitants will suffer some disease?" asked Zanan.

As the participants nervously waited for an answer, the sedaned deity walked backward.

"Will some Mansion members die from disease or some accident?" continued Zanan.


The sedaned deity again walked backward.

Despite various questions, by the participants, it was unclear what tragedy would befall the Mansion. Nevertheless, it was certain that a disaster would befall Mansion family members.

After this, Monk Nangsuu and Mansion residents naturally felt disturbed and panicky. They were left with many questions. What disaster? When? Sooner or later? To whom?

36

LAXJA IS DRIVEN FROM THE MANSION

 Jiraqong's husband, Hgunqogsirang, and Layinsuu's husband, Limusairang, were brothers. They were Hgunqog's sons and had been extremely spoiled, often committing mischief together. They stole things from the Mansion and sold them for cash, had affairs with women, gambled, fought, drank liquor, and so on. The Hgunqog family exercised much power in the Mansion because there were four sons. Hgunqogsirang and Limusairang looked down on everyone in the Mansion except Monk Nangsuu. They often left the Mansion and did whenever they liked, and returned very late at night.

Hgunqogsirang did not love Jiraqog and treated her like a servant or worse still, a dog. He often scolded her, and even beat her when he returned from drinking sessions. However, he dared not end the marriage because he was worried it would annoy Monk Nangsuu.

Jiraqog felt helpless. After a long time of mental and physical suffering, she had grown progressively thinner. Her only allies were her beloved Laxja and her "sister," Layinsuu. While Hgunqogsirang was away from the Mansion, Jiraqog and Laxja secretly met, exchanging heartfelt words, despite being afraid that Hgunqogsirang would discover them.

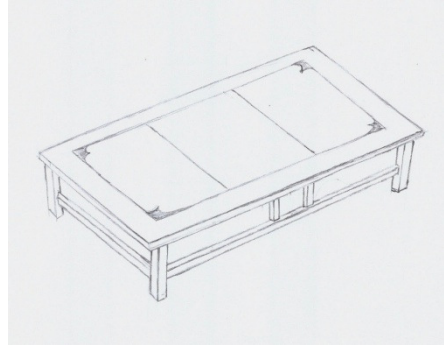
Laxja was a thorn in Hgunqogsirang's flesh and he waited for a chance to seriously injure him.

One night when Hgunqogsirang and Limusairang were gambling with sheep bone discs and drinking with four fair-weather friends in a home in Wuxi Village, Hgunqogsirang lost at gambling. Feeling very disgruntled, he drank a lot without regard to anyone else and began behaving unusually. Observing this abnormal behavior,

one of his friends said, "Brother! What's wrong with you? You look unhappy. Are you upset because you lost money this evening?"

Raising his cup and opening his eyes Hgunqogsirang declared, "No! No! No! I'm not that kind of man. I have plenty of money. Don't you know where I'm from? Let me tell you, I'm from Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion!"

"I know that! You're an official. Money is not a worry for you. What is bothering you? Tell us! We'd like to help you deal with it," offered another drunk friend.



Putting down his empty liquor cup Hgunqogsirang confessed, "I truly have a headache. You all know I have a love rival in the Mansion - Laxja. He and his grandparents and parents are servants in our Mansion. Since being assigned as a jailer by Monk Nangsuu, he has become a different person. He is self-centered, arrogant, and looks down his nose at everybody. He often brings criminals to the Nangsuu Mansion jail and many bribe him. That's why he has become wealthy.

"Most importantly he has maintained contact with my wife, Jiraqog, even since we married. I have warned him several times, but he doesn't care!"

"Such a small thing bothers you so much! Why didn't you mention this to us before? Let's do it! Let's take revenge tonight!" chimed the fair-weather friends in unison.

Hgunqogsirang and Limusairang were pleased and discussed their next move. Once they had agreed, they headed off toward Nangsuu Mansion. Meanwhile, the four friends hid near the entrance leading to the front gate of the Mansion.

Reaching the front gate, Hgunqogsirang and Limusairang shouted at the corner room built atop the front gate where the front

gate guard rested and patrolled in the evening, "Open the door! Open the door! Be quick!"

Hearing the shouts, the guard immediately realized it was Hgunqogsirang and Limusairang who frequently came and went very late at night. He got up immediately and opened the gate. The two entered and clutching the guard by his upper clothes in the corridor, demanded, "Go tell Laxja that someone wants to see him in front of the Mansion. Don't let anyone know that we told you to ask him to go outside to meet someone. Keep this a secret or you should watch out for your head." Then the two left and walked into their respective rooms.

The gate guard was frightened. He did not want to tell Laxja because he knew that in the hands of the two evil-hearted brothers Laxja would be in serious trouble. On the other hand, he was worried about his own safety. The two brothers would punish or injure him if he didn't obey them.

In the end, he decided to go to the jail room where he woke Laxja and told him that someone wanted to see him outside the Mansion.

"Damn! Who wants to see me so late at night?" protested Laxja rubbing his eyes and standing up. "Oh, it must be the family of the criminal who was jailed today. They want to bribe me so why not go meet them!"

Going out the front gate, he couldn't see anyone in the darkness. He walked to the lane leading out of the village calling, "Who is it? Where are you?"

"I'm here, Laxja Brother. It's me!" a voice responded from some distance away.

As Laxja walked closer, four men jumped from the side of the lane and attacked with kicks and punches. Laxja soon fell to the ground. His attackers stuffed a ball of sheep's wool into his mouth, tied his arms behind his back, and took him down to the Wuxi River. First, they made him whole one of the men brutally smashed his calf with a big club. Laxja immediately fell.

"Listen Laxja, don't enter Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion again! Have no further contact with Jiraqog! Your life will be finished if you do!" threatened the four men as Laxja writhed in agony and then they fled.

37

MONK NANGSUU GETS BAD NEWS

Early the next morning Laxja was found by villagers who had come to fetch water. They promptly removed the ball of sheep's wool from his mouth and untied his arms. His head was badly injured and his right calf was fractured. He was barely able to speak. Learning that he was from Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion and had been beaten during the night, they wanted to carry him to the Mansion. Laxja panicked at the mention of Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion and insisted that he didn't want to go there.

A woman puzzled, "You don't want to return to your Mansion in Tughuan Village so where should we take you?"

"To Qiyansuu's home," Laxja weakly bleated.

"You mean Jangja Village? Is Qiyansuu your relative?" the woman continued sympathetically.

Laxja nodded. Qiyansuu was Laxja's aunt, his father's younger sister. She had married into Jangja Village from the Mansion.

Villagers ran to Qiyansuu's home, informed them, and then took him there.

Laxja was well cared for in Qiyansuu's home. His head wound was tied with a cloth bandage, his broken calf bone was fixed with splints, and he was treated to good food.

News of Laxja's encounter quickly spread in Wuxi Valley. People were shocked. They couldn't believe there were people who dared to beat up anyone from Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. People talked and gossiped in the village lanes. They speculated that Laxja might have been harmed by a criminal wanting to avenge his brutal treatment while he was in the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion jail.

Monk Nangsuu and the other family members were shocked when Qiyansuu came to report Laxja's situation.

When Jiraqog heard this news, she ran to her living room, buried her head under a gown, and wept. She was sure that her husband had committed this brutality.

Fuming with rage, Monk Nangsuu shouted, "Criminals have dared enter the Mansion and kidnap Mansion residents. There must be hidden traitors in the Mansion. We will seriously punish them once we identify them. Go ask the gate guard to come here!"

Hgunqogsirang and Limusairang were present. Hearing the gate guard being questioned, they were extremely frightened and regretted that their friends had not killed Laxja.

At this critical juncture, a servant ran to report to Monk Nangsuu that Tughuan Living Buddha had come to visit. Monk Nangsuu and all other family members immediately rushed out to where Tughuan Living Buddha had already arrived with his retinue that included Mamadii.

The Living Buddha was warmly invited into Monk Nangsuu's living room, seated, and food was offered to him and his retinue.

The Living Buddha explained, "I returned from the Mongol areas a month ago. I took this chance to visit you today as I was traveling to Rgulang Monastery."

"Wonderful! I'm very happy to see you. It's been a long time! I have missed you!" Monk Nangsuu replied.

They first talked about many things. While Monk Nangsuu described his subjects, Tughuan villagers, and the many events that had transpired in the Mansion. The Living Buddha then described what he had experienced in the Mongol areas, Beijing, and elsewhere.

Finally, the Living Buddha said, "I now need to tell you about something that is not so good for you. An official county will soon be established in the Seven Valleys and the *nangsuu* system will be abolished. Your subjects will pay the land tax directly to the granaries in the newly established county, and no longer to their own *nangsuu*.

The *nangsuu* governors will soon disappear into history. You will become a commoner, just like your subjects."


"Ah! Impossible! We have had this system for centuries. It can't be!" a shocked Monk Nangsuu exclaimed.

"It will surely be as I have described," affirmed the Living Buddha.

"That explains why at this year's *lazii* our sacred sheep didn't shake her head after milk was poured on her head and ears in front of Gunbuquxjang Tankari. That frightened us. We asked Xuanglang Liuya and the answer from the deity was that disaster would befall people in the Mansion, but it would not be a disease. The deity gave a very unclear answer. Now I understand the answer, the loss of the Nangsuu title! We will become commoners just like our subjects. Oh, Heaven! We have to face it as it happens," sighed Monk Nangsuu in despair.

38

THE NANGSUU POSITION IS ABOLISHED

n August 1930, the Huzhu County Government was established. In the fall of the following year, Monk Nangsuu was asked to join a meeting held in the county seat in what is today's Weiyuan Town. He went with his two assistants, Niruu and Rnqan.

Many Nangsuu, tribal heads, and *tusi* gathered in the big hall. The meeting began with a county official outlining the situation:

The County government was established last year. Today the County government has invited all of you local chiefs, Nangsuu, and other tribal heads here for this very important meeting. We officially declare that from today all *tusi*, Nangsuu, and other titles are abolished. All of your subjects will now be governed by the County government, and pay land tax to the county granaries.

This important announcement was also made to all the subjects in the County. They were no longer subordinate to the *tusi*, Nangsuu, and other tribal leaders. They were to pay land tax to the county granaries rather than to their previous leaders.

Monk Nangsuu was dispirited and felt great pressure. With Rnqan and Niruu he returned to his Mansion where suddenly, everything seemed changed. It all had become strange and valueless in his eyes.

After learning this sad news from Monk Nangsuu, the Mansion residents also felt frustrated and depressed. They now did not know how to organize their lives or think about their future.

Walking into the shrine courtyard, Monk Nangsuu ascended the soil platform and with great weariness walked into his shrine. He carefully inspected the shrine rooms and saw Xuanglang Liuya absolutely still and at ease in her seat, as she always was. It seemed she knew what had happened to the Mansion, her people in the Mansion, and the master and lord inside the strongly built, high Mansion with such a long history. She seemed to know everything about Monk Nangsuu, including that he and all his subjects had encountered great suffering. Despite this, her expression was completely normal.

Looking towards the back of the shrine room wall, he saw that the image of the black six-armed Gunbuquxjang Tankari was as it always had been, still furiously staring at Monk Nangsuu. Again, Monk Nangsuu realized why the sacred sheep had not shaken during the *lazii* ritual. Gunbuquxjang Tankari had known everything but did not tell his people earlier so as not to make them overly sad.

The dark old chest used to support the lamps in front of the deity had been blackened and covered with oil over the last centuries by many generations of Nangsuu in Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion. Countless lamps had been offered respectfully to their protector deity by countless hands in order to make the Mansion stronger and safer. However, from today, it had suddenly changed. Perhaps the deities would lose their majesty and power. Perhaps the two deities would still protect the Mansion members, but how strong would they be, and, with the Nangsuu title now gone forever, how would the two implement their powers?

Monk Nangsuu lit three big lamps in front of them. The lamps glowed vigorously. No longer able to help himself, he collapsed on the ground sobbing before his deities, with tears flowing from his worn face, soaking the floor.

The winter that year was exceptionally cold. Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion was particularly desolate compared with the bustle of previous years. No subjects came to pay land tax and offer New

Year's gifts, no people came with lawsuits, and no people came to help with the work at the Mansion.

On New Year's Eve and on the first day of the first lunar month, Monk Nangsuu stayed in his living room in his courtyard. He didn't ask anybody to come in except his young wife, Sishihua. He warmed liquor by himself on the brazier and drank by himself. Every now and then Sishihua stoked the brazier fire and filled both his teacup and dragon-patterned drinking bowl.

Inevitably Monk Nangsuu became drunk. Sometimes he laughed and sometimes he wept from sadness. Sometimes he sang a drinking song:

Munu aama qi nige sunisi,
Bu saiha moringi hgilegunii,
Malang buda ghuila mori awula
yog,
Moringi guisa yamagiji qirig
durigui?

Mother, please listen,
I need a fine horse,
Tomorrow, we will go buy a fine
horse,
How can I go to battle without a
fine horse?

Munu aam qi nige sunisi,
Bu shdaghudii yimeeligi
hgilegunii,
Malang buda ghuila yimeeli awula
yog,
Yimeeligi guisa yamagiji qirig
durigui?

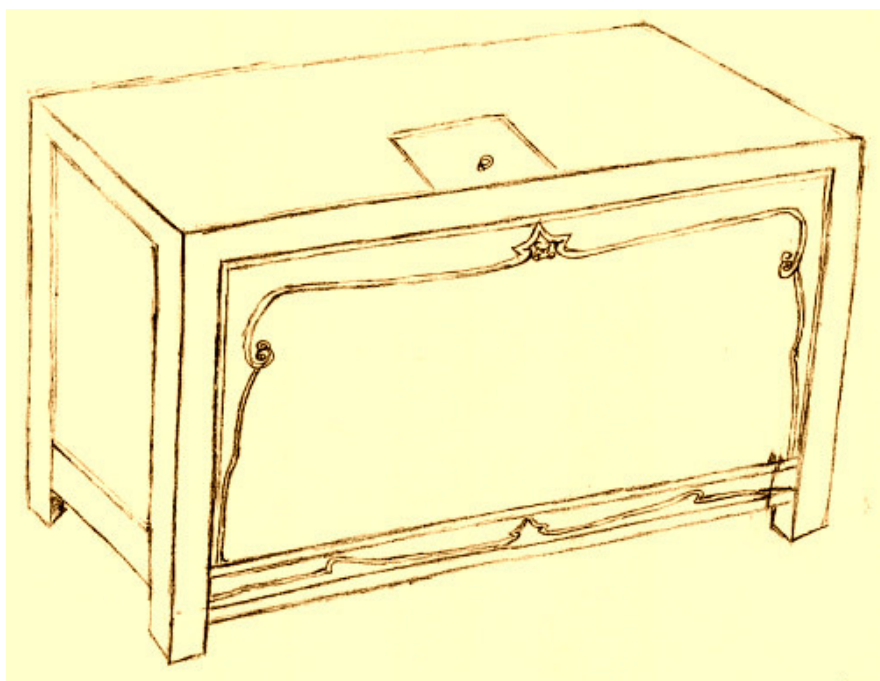
Mother, please listen,
I want a birch saddle,
Tomorrow, we will go buy a
saddle,
How can I go to battle without a
saddle?

Sometimes he chanted scriptures while fingering a string of prayer beads in his right hand:

Sangrijiila xasinqu,
Lamala xasinqu,
Qiila xasinqu,
Gindinla xasinqu.


Go seek a refuge master,
Go seek a refuge Buddha,
Go seek refuge dharma,
Go seek a refuge monk.

Disappointed and irritable now that his Nangsuu power was gone, Monk Nangsuu was very depressed during Spring Festival.



39

THE TUGHUAN NANGSUU
FAMILY SEPARATES

eeding time arrived. No subjects came to assist as in previous years so the people at Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion had to plant their many fields by themselves. During this extremely busy, exhausting time, several unpleasantaries occurred among the Mansion residents. The main cause of disharmony was the uneven distribution of labor. Of course, the loss of Monk Nangsuu's power and prestige was another key reason.

After the time-consuming and extremely difficult seeding was finally concluded, Hgunqog was tired and rested on his *pei*, smoking and drinking tea by a fire of sheep dung. Suddenly his sons, Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang, came in declaring, "Father, we have come to discuss something with you? Is that OK?"

"Please go on," Hgunqog replied.

Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang sat next to their father, on a piece of dark felt by the smoldering fire, and continued, "Father, you have already seen for yourself how hard we worked during seeding time this year after the loss of our subjects. It's so unfair! You know my family is the main source of labor in the Mansion. You have four sons, but what about uncles Zanan and Mamadii? They have no sons. My family has done most of the work. We want to separate and work for ourselves. This is the only way we can work easily and schedule our labor in the future. Do you agree?"

Hgunqog was shocked by this sudden, unexpected question. He didn't know how to answer. A bit later, he queried, "How could it be? You two have been designated as sons to Zanan and Mamadii.

Please don't think this way. We are still a family in the Mansion. If you create conflict by separating from the Mansion, Tughuan Nangsuu's prestige will be lost. Others will gossip to our Nangsuu people," and concluded that he disagreed with their request.

"We are not the sons of your brothers. We are your sons. We never loved their daughters, Layinsuu and Jiraqog. What's more, the government has abolished the Nangsuu title. We are no longer a family of officials. Monk Nangsuu has no power to manage us," continued the sons.

Hgunqog hung his head and said nothing.

"If we don't separate, Monk Nangsuu will secretly give gold, silver, and other valuables in the Mansion to Zanan and Mamadii as well as to loyal servants, such as Niruu and Rnqan. It's time to divide the property otherwise it will be too late. We don't want to do anything we would regret later!" elaborated the brothers.

Enraged, Hgunqog responded "No! I won't do it that way. We are Nangsuu people. We are still united as one. We don't want to lose our glory and honor! Please get out! Get out!"

Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang left quickly, but they didn't give up. Clearly, their father didn't support them. He still wanted them all to stay together with Monk Nangsuu and the Mansion. However, the two brothers were ready to separate and divide Tughuan Nangsuu's property and establish independent lives.

One night after supper, Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang walked into Monk Nangsuu's living room and declared that they had come to discuss something. Monk Nangsuu was turning his prayer beads and chanting evening scriptures. Seeing them rush in, he realized they were not bringing good news. He stopped chanting and invited them to continue.

Hgunqogsirang started first, "Monk Nangsuu, the number of Mansion members has increased. We have come to discuss with you our desire to separate from the Mansion by dividing the property and land."

Monk Nangsuu furiously shouted, "Bad boys! You are worse than beasts! Sinners in the Mansion! You two guys must know I didn't punish you for beating Laxja! How dare you come speaking of family division?!"

"How can you say such a thing? Are you still Nangsuu? You have no right to govern us! Regardless of what you say, we want to divide the property and land. We want to move out of the Mansion. It's so depressing living here!" Hgunqogsirang shouted back aggressively.

Monk Nangsuu was so angry that he fainted. Sishihua was frightened. She cried loudly, approached her husband and cradled his head while wailing and shouting. People soon came to help while Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang fled.

Soon, Zanan, Hgunqog, Mamadii, Niruu, Rnqan, Layinsuu, and Jiraqog had gathered. Seeing Monk Nangsuu unconscious, they cried out. Layinsuu rushed into the kitchen and brought out a flour sieve and water. Taking a sip of the water, Zanan sprayed it onto Monk Nangsuu's face through the sieve to expel evils that might have invaded him.

It wasn't long before Monk Nangsuu revived, and opening his eyes he looked around the room. Seeing that his faithful people were there, a slight smile flashed over his wrinkled face, while simultaneously two lines of tears rolled down.

After this tremendous row with Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang, Monk Nangsuu had to make concessions. One morning he gathered Zanan, Hgunqog, and Mamadii in his personal courtyard. Seeing Monk Nangsuu's sallow face and low spirits, they knew it would be a difficult family gathering and that Monk Nangsuu had something important to announce.

Monk Nangsuu asked Sishihua to offer tea to those gathered. Then he began, "Zanan, Hgunqog, and Mamadii, my three nephews, I asked you to come here to hear something important. The Nangsuu position has gone. Every relationship between our subjects and the Mansion has ceased. Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang were our

Mansion's black sheep. They arranged for hooligans to beat Laxja and drive him out of the Mansion. They now want to divide the family property and land and to move out of the Mansion. I really have no choice. It looks like we cannot continue to live together as we used to. I'm getting old. I won't live for many more years. To avoid further unnecessary trouble from these two black sheep, today I declare that we will equally divide the Mansion's property, land, and everything. This should prevent future conflicts among you should I die suddenly. Please understand my heart. I hope our family members will have better, prosperous lives after the division."

At this moment several ravens landed on the watchtower in the southwest corner of the Mansion wall and squawked, their raucous cawing stabbing deeply into the hearts of Monk Nangsuu and his three nephews. They all dropped their heads and stayed silent, recalling the immense glory and achievements of the Mansion's past that contrasted so sharply with the rapid decline happening before their very eyes.

Zanan made the situation worse by bursting into tears, which he wiped away with the sleeves of his robe. Monk Nangsuu's yellow pet dog, seeming to sense the sadness of the situation, walked forward quietly and licked Monk Nangsuu's hand.

Over several days all the Mansion's property, buildings, fields, pastures, trees, furniture, livestock, and so on were divided. Zanan, Hgunqog, and Mamadii were assigned the most while Rnqan, Niruu, and other Mansion servants received smaller portions. Monk Nangsuu built new enclosing courtyards in the Mansion's fields in Tughuan Village for every servant.

Hgunqog's family also moved out and built four enclosing courtyards near the Mansion with each of the four sons assigned one household. Hgunqog and his wife lived together with their youngest son, Limujansan.

Mamadii's family stayed in the Mansion.

Monk Nangsuu said that he would like to spend the sunset of his life with Zanan's family in his personal courtyard in the Mansion.

One night, as Jiraqog was sleeping, Hgunqogsirang, Limusairang and some of their fair-weather friends broke in and silently took Hgunqogsirang's belongings from the room. Before walking out, Hgunqogsirang turned and, staring down at Jiraqog shouted, "Bitch! You bothered my life in the past. Now, sleep with any men you want!"

The same night, after taking Hgunqogsirang's belongings, they went into Layinsuu's living room and took all Limusairang's things to his newly built household. Before Limusairang left, he shouted at Layinsuu, "Bitch! Now you can have many wild children like your son - Nengnengbog!" and then they left through the open door.



40

MONK NANGSUU'S DEATH



couple of years passed and then one late summer afternoon when a rainstorm drenched Tughuan Village, the Mansion's wall cracked under heavy rain. The soil turned to mud and flowed to the base of the wall. Moss on the wall was dark green and full of vitality. Weeds on top of the wall had grown so much that the walkway surrounding the Mansion wall was nearly invisible. The corner rooms on top of the wall were in disrepair. Their roofs had collapsed, the windows were broken, and a thick layer of dust had collected on the floors inside the rooms.

Wearing his old, dark-red woolen robe and bent over, Monk Nangsuu walked towards the Mansion's front gate slowly and carefully, holding a walking stick in his right hand. His sight was now limited as a white cloudy substance covered the surface of his eyes. He could barely hear. Asthma forced him to rest frequently. His faithful yellow dog followed, paying close attention to its master.

Monk Nangsuu stumbled on the stone steps and could hardly cross the high, wide threshold that was choked with weeds along the long passageway. Feeling sad, he turned and walked into his own courtyard. At this time, Nengnengbog ran to him, calling sweetly, "Great-grandpa! Great-grandpa! I'm coming!"

It cheered Monk Nangsuu to see the Mansion's youngest generation smiling and calling out. He stopped and patted Nengnengbog's head gently. Nengnengbog held Monk Nangsuu's left hand. Layinsuu came over too and supporting Monk Nangsuu's right arm, they together walked him into his room and to his *yikang*.

Monk Nangsuu lived in the courtyard at the southwest corner of the Mansion with his wife Sishihua; Zanan and his wife, Wuxihua;

Layinsuu; Nengnengbog; and the pet dog. He was very glad that the small, newly-formed family lived harmoniously. Sishihua, and Layinsuu took very good care of him. Monk Nangsuu guarded the courtyard when other family members went out to work in the fields. At other times, he chanted scriptures while fingering his prayer beads.

The next morning at breakfast, Monk Nangsuu, looking fresh-faced, happily told his family about the dream: "Last night I had a nice dream. It was a summer day. Many people were in the courtyards and passageways inside the Mansion. There was so little space that many had to sit on the roofs and the top of the Mansion walls. Everybody was wearing new, beautiful Mongghul clothes, which looked so colorful and bright in the warm sunshine. In each courtyard, the passageway, and on the roofs, people sat in circles eating bread and drinking black tea and liquor. They were laughing, joking, and singing.

"There were many fine horses and mules in the stable yard. Our subjects had come to take part in some ceremony in our Mansion. Those horses and mules raised their ears listening to the songs.

"A while later, men gathered in the passageway and started wrestling each other, one by one. Mamadii emerged as the champion, easily defeating all his rivals, who congratulated him by throwing him in the air and, catching him in their arms once he came down. He was thrown several times.

"In the courtyard of the jail surrounding the small round plot located at the center of the courtyard, a group of women was performing a circle dance, led by two men who were singing and dancing:

Niudurigu ne saihan durishdi,	On today's nice day,
Saihan rgu shdanchiliwa.	It is propitious for good things to
	come.

"When the leading men's songs finished, women began dancing and singing songs while also circling the small garden. It was

so wonderful! Everybody was happily enjoying themselves," Monk Nangsuu concluded.

"Your dream sounds wonderful. Those were our Mansion's glory years," Zanan responded while eating a piece of bread.

"But how bleak the outlook seems today! Everything has changed in the Mansion," sighed Monk Nangsuu, putting his head down.

Placing his tea bowl on the table, Zanan urged, "Don't feel sad. Everything changes. It is the law of nature. Different times operate according to different rules. We cannot change these things so we must adapt."

"Great-grandpa! Please have your breakfast now. Your tea is growing cold," encouraged Layinsuu gently as she walked forward, picked up the tea bowl from Monk Nangsuu's hands, and asked him to drink.

When the tea accidentally splashed on Monk Nangsuu's trembling hands, Sishihua immediately took the tea bowl, wiped his hands with a towel, and gently chastised him, "You are truly a child, just like Nengnengbog! Don't be sad. Forget your past, OK? Aren't we living happy lives today in this courtyard? A small family is much happier than a bigger one. Sometimes a big Mansion isn't happier than a small courtyard, right? We enjoy a better and happier life now than in the past. We are good to you. We love you. We want you to enjoy a long life and stay with us as long as possible."

Some days later Monk Nangsu died peacefully. After breakfast, he went to his shrine rooms where, as usual, he burned incense offerings, and lit three butter lamps to Xuanglang Liuya and Gunbuquxjang. After making three prostrations he sat cross-legged on the floor in the shrine and chanted scriptures.


At lunchtime, when Monk Nangsuu hadn't turned up, Layinsuu sent Nengnengbog to look for him. Seeing him in the shrine room Nengnengbog entered and spoke to Monk Nangsuu who did not respond. He gently pushed him, but when there was still no response, he ran back to notify his family.

Zanan arrived to find that Monk Nangsuu had passed away sitting in a crossed-legged position.

It was in autumn, sometime in the 1930s.

41

JIRAQOG AND LAXJA RENEW THEIR RELATIONSHIP

ne year after going to his aunt's home in Jangja Village, Laxja recovered and was able to walk without assistance. His successful recovery was attributed to good care from Limuqog, Qiyansuu's daughter.

Limuqog was Qiyansuu's only child. The couple didn't want Limuqog to marry and leave their home. Rather, they wanted her husband to come and live in their home and take care of the couple when they grew old. During the period Laxja was in Limuqog's home, given their intimate contact, the two young people inevitably fell in love and eventually married. Laxja stayed in Limuqog's home. They had a happy life. When Limuqog gave birth to a son, the family was very glad.

The night Hgunqogsirang moved his belongings from his room in the Mansion, Jiraqog and Hgunqogsirang's marriage ended. Hgunqogsirang soon married again. Jiraqog continued to live with her father, Mamadii, and her two "mothers" - Rnqanhua, her biological mother and Srinsuu, Mamadii's wife. Their family remained in the Mansion. The four made their lives together. Jiraqog's father and mothers were depressed that Jiraqog had no husband. They wanted a man to marry her and move into their home, but they couldn't find anyone suitable. They prayed daily for a husband for Jiraqog and that they would soon have a child to carry on the family line.

One morning, in a low adobe room beside a lane in Zanghqua Village, a man naked from the waist up, held a red-hot iron shard

with tongs and pounded it with a hammer gripped in his right hand. Once the sickle was formed, the man plunged it into the water. Steam rose from the water. Layinsuu watched this forging process. The sickle was being forged for her. The harvesting period would soon begin and Layinsuu had asked the blacksmith to make sickles in preparation for the harvest.

On this same morning, a man who was lame also came in to see the blacksmith, in search of sickles. He seemed somewhat familiar to Layinsuu.

"It is you! Laxja, how are you?" exclaimed Layinsuu, immediately walking forward, taking Laxja's hand.

"Ah! Layinsuu, how amazing to meet you! I'm fine! How about you? I have missed you! It's been such a long time," replied Laxja, holding Layinsuu's hands.

Drawing Laxja out of the forge, Layinsuu continued with her news, "We are all fine. You probably heard that Monk Nangsuu passed away. The Nangsuu title has been abolished. People in the Mansion have split into several groups. Some built enclosed courtyards outside the Mansion. I live with my family in the Mansion in Monk Nangsuu's courtyard. Jiraqog also lives with her family in the Mansion. Uncle Hgunqog and his four sons have moved out."

"Yes, I heard some news, but not very much. How is Jiraqog? Is she still Hgunqogsirang's wife?" asked Laxja. Since being beaten, he had suffered so much that he had decided to erase Jiraqog from his mind. He didn't want to know anything about her. When people mentioned anything about Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion, he interrupted them.

"No, Jiraqog ended her relationship with Hgunqogsirang. They are no longer in contact. Hgunqogsirang has married another woman. Jiraqog learned that you had married your aunt's daughter and didn't want to contact you, but you are still in her heart. When we are together, she mentions you and it is obvious she misses you very much. Anyway, it's her destiny! Heaven has given her an unfair life," concluded Layinsuu emotionally.

As his eyes grew moist Laxja pulled his white felt hat forward to cover them. His woolen bag slid from his right shoulder down to his elbow. Layinsuu quickly helped him put the woolen bag back on his shoulder.

Laxja thanked Layinsuu and choked up as Jiraqog's face and a series of scenes they had experienced together sprang up in his mind.

"Please go see Jiraqog. She has gone to weed in the field on the slope of the back mountain," Layinsuu suggested.

Laxja turned and, quickly limped to the field, his long pigtail swinging left and right on his back. After walking along a rugged path at the edge of a long, deep ravine, Laxja eventually reached the familiar field where he had once worked. Having climbed up the slope, he looked down into the field and saw Jiraqog weeding among the waist-high wheat. She bent over and weeded; stood up, putting the weeds across her left arm; and then she bent over and repeated the process.

Laxja softly walked towards her. "Jiraqog," he called when he was near her.

"Who is it?" Jiraqog shouted back in fright.

"It's me," Laxja said, raising his head and looking at her.

"Ah! Great Heaven! It's you Laxja! I never imagined you would come to visit me! Who told you I was here?" Jiraqog exclaimed, pushing the wheat aside and running out of the field.

"Layinsuu told me," Laxja replied.

They embraced tightly and looked at each other with great emotion. Tears flowed down Jiraqog's cheeks. Laxja licked them up. At this moment, they silently stared at each other and listened to each other's pounding heart. Jiraqog took off her headdress and dropped it on the ground. She removed Laxja's white felt hat. Laxja pressed Jiraqog down under his powerful, muscular body. Hidden in the tall, lush grass at the foot of the slope, Laxja moved up and down rhythmically as Jiraqog moaned, a fine mist falling from the sky, gently patting Jiraqog's delicate face. She felt that she was the

happiest person ever. As she lay under the low, thick grey clouds she thought she had never experienced such ecstasy.

After a long while, the two sat on the grass, exhausted by their passion. Laxja took his pipe from his sash and puffed after lighting the pipe with tinder and flint. He puffed one bowl of tobacco after another.

"May I see your calf?" asked Jiraqog. Rolling up Laxja's trousers she found his right calf was not straight, but curved and deformed.

"Does it hurt when you walk?" Jiraqog asked, rubbing his leg.

Removing the pipe from his mouth Laxja explained, "There's no pain in the broken place, however, it's shorter than the other so I walk with a limp. As a result, I now have back pain."

Jiraqog felt sad.

"I'm lucky that I can walk. That dark night I was worried they would beat me to death," Laxja comforted.

"I'm sorry that my former husband, Hgunqogsirang, and his brother, Limusairang, those black sheep, plotted this tragedy. How is your life in Jangja Village?" Jiraqog asked.

"Great! My wife, Limuqog, is good to me. I already have a son," Laxja answered.

"Congratulations on having a good wife and family. My situation is different. I have lost direction in life. My parents are sad that I have no man and no children," Jiraqog said.

Laxja patted Jiraqog's shoulder and said, "Don't think that way! I will accompany you forever."

"No, it cannot be. You have a family. I don't want to disturb you," Jiraqog said firmly.

"Don't worry! Limuqog is sympathetic and often mentions you. After what I told her and what she has heard from others, she thinks you are kind," Laxja replied.

Jiraqog smiled happily.

Afterward, Laxja periodically came to the Mansion, going back and forth between the two families. He visited Jiraqog and

helped Jiraqog's family with heavy farm work. Mamadii and his wife as well as Jiraqog's own mother, Rnqanhua, regarded Laxja as their son.

Later Jiraqog gave birth to a son. The Mamadii couple and Rnqanhua were very happy because a son brought hope. He would continue their family line.

Some years later, Jiraqog had a daughter.

Jiraqog and Laxja continued this arrangement for the rest of their lives.

42

A PLOWING CEREMONY
IN ZANAN'S FIELD

Early in the third lunar month, when the winter snow had melted and the soil in the field grew warmer day by day it was again time to plow and sow.

Lasizisirang and his wife, Qixangsuu, arrived and dismounted at the Mansion. To their surprise, the big front gate was gone from the Mansion wall. All that remained was an opening where the gate used to be.

The two walked through the wall opening and turned into Zanan's courtyard. Layinsuu, Wuxihua, and Zanan came out and greeted them.

"Where has the Mansion's front gate gone?" Lasizisirang asked directly.

Zanan sighed heavily as he explained, "Half a month ago, the Mansion's black sheep, Limusairang and Hgunqogsirang, came and dismantled the doors and moved them to their homes. We tried to prevent them, but in vain."

Lasizisirang shook his head angrily, "As a former subject of the Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion, I feel sad and angry. I never thought such black sheep would appear in Nangsuu's family, damaging the Mansion and the Nangsuu family! Maybe it is the will of Heaven!"

Lasizisirang and Qixangsuu had come with their oxen to help Zanan's family's plow and sow. Zanan suffered back pain so he couldn't easily do the hard work anymore. Because Tughuan Village was located south of Lasizisirang's village, Luxuu, the weather here

turned warmer a bit earlier so the time to plow was earlier than in Luxuu.

That night, Zanan consulted Xuanglang Liuya about the start date of the plowing season and learned that plowing should begin the next day.

That very next day, in their best clothes, Zanan's whole family went to one of their own fields by Wuxi River. Almost every year, this level field was the first one to be plowed. Zanan led the procession with the others following. A plow was drawn by a pair of oxen whose horns were pasted with strips of red paper. Zanan plowed a furrow in a large circle at the center of the field and made a cross within the circle. When he had finished the second stroke of the cross, the oxen's heads pointed in an easterly direction, from which, according to Xuanglang Liuya's prediction, happiness, good harvest and prosperity would emanate during the year. This direction might vary from year to year.

All the family members, including Lasizisirang and Qixangsuu, walked into the center of the circle. They knelt in rows and faced the oxen. A big incense offering was burned in the circle. Zanan offered a large loaf of flat circular bread to the Earth God. He burned incense sticks in a hole in the center of the bread. Then the family made three prostrations while Zanan poured liquor on the ground and flicked it to every place in the circle to delight the Earth God.

Next, Zanan divided the bread into small pieces and distributed some to each family member and the two oxen to eat immediately. The remaining bread was broken into crumbs and thrown onto the field for the Earth God and to ask for a good harvest and protection against hail.

With the ceremony concluded, the families returned to their homes, except for Lasizisirang, who remained to plow. The plowing and sowing thus began in the same field as it almost always did.

That night, Layinsuu and Qixangsuu lay together in Layinsuu's room. They talked their hearts out under the covers.

"Dear Layinsuu, my husband, Lasizisirang, greatly admires you. He often describes you as compassionate and beautiful. He says you are the prettiest, most kindhearted woman in Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion."

"Please don't make such jokes! Your husband merely pities my sad background and miserable life. Anyway, he is the finest man I have ever met," Layinsuu replied.

Qixangsuu moved close to Layinsuu, touched her face with her hand, and said, "Layinsuu, please don't scold me. I like you. You will always be my elder sister. Great Heaven has allowed us to meet. Tughuan Nangsuu arranged for me to marry Lasizisirang, and later I met you. Though the Nangsuu system is gone, we still have each other."

Layinsuu was deeply moved.


Several days later, when all Layinsuu's fields had been plowed and sowed, Layinsuu went to work in Lasizisirang's fields in Luxuu Village with Lasizisirang and Qixangsuu.

The next morning, Lasizisirang, Layinsuu, and Qixangsuu leaped onto their horses but, before leaving, Lasizisirang suggested, "Shall we first circumambulate the Mansion that has given us great sadness but also, countless moments of glory and pride?"

"Yes! What you said is so true!" Layinsuu responded immediately.

Lasizisirang cantered ahead while Layinsuu and Qixangsuu followed. They circumambulated Tughuan Nangsuu Mansion three times counterclockwise and then galloped to the main village entrance. They headed outside the village and soon vanished from the sight of anyone who might have been watching.

THE END

n the following years, Lasizisirang, Qixangsuu, and Layinsuu came and went between the two families. The former Tughuan Nangsuu's subject, Lasizisirang, continued visiting the Mansion. He shuttled between the two "sisters," Layinsuu and Qixangsuu, until they grew old.

A couple of years later, in 1938, Ma Bufang,¹⁸³ the provincial governor, forced Mongghul women to remove their headdresses, which then disappeared from daily use. Mongghul women put their hair in two braids and put the braids down their backs.

On the day Layinsuu and Jiraqog removed their Tughuan headdress and braided their hair, they were reluctant to go outside Tughuan Mansion to meet outsiders. After all, they had always worn the Tughuan headdress that women in the Mansion and Tughuan Village had taken pride in for centuries.

The world was rapidly changing. They had experienced many significant changes in their lifetimes and many more lay ahead.

¹⁸³ Ma Bufang (1903-1975) was a member of a prominent warlord family in northwest China during the Republic of China era, controlling Qinghai Province.

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SELECTED

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Amduu, a mdo ཨ་མདུ་ Anduo 安多

anfu 安抚

bankang 板炕

Bazha 巴扎

binkang, benkang 本康

boqi, boji 簸箕

bsang བསང་།

Chen Qiang 陈强

chi 尺

chubingshoubing 出兵收兵

chuula, chu l+wa ཅུ་ལ་ལ་

Daban 大板

dafatai 大法台

dalangiighuran,

daleen, ta len ཌལེན་ dalian 裕褸

Darima, Danma 丹麻

Datong 大通

Donggou 东沟

Donghe 东和

Dongshan 东山

Dongxia 东峡

dou 斗

dpa' ris དཔལ་རིས།

fan 幡

fashi 法师

Foori, Huoer 霍尔

Fooriguan Tang, Huoerjun 霍尔郡

fu 府

fuguibuduantou 富贵不断头

Gannan 甘南, kan lho ཀན་ལྷོ།

Gansu 甘肃

Gantan 甘滩

Gilog, mgo log མགོ་ལོག་ Guoluo 果洛

Gunbuquxjang, Daheitiashen

大黑天神

Haibei 海北

Haidong 海东

Hainan 海南

Halazhigou 哈拉直沟

Han 汉

Hongyazigou 红崖子沟

huali 华里

Mati 马蹄

Mehase lama, Lhamo lama, lha

mo bla ma ལྷ་མོ་བླ་མ།

Ming 明

Minhe 民和

Mongghul, Monguor,

Mangghuer, Tu 土

mu 亩

nangsuu, angso 昂锁

Nanmusedanmaer, rnam sras

mdung dmar རྩམ་སྤྱོད་མཐུན་དམར།

nantianmen 南天门

Nenbei, Nianbo 碾伯

Nengnengbog, Niangniangbao

娘娘宝

Niuqi, Liushuigou 流水沟

Ping'an 平安

Pudang, Pudonggou 普洞沟

qanma, qianma 钱马

Qianlong 乾隆

Qijia 祁家

Qin 秦

Qing 清

Qinghai 青海

Qingshengjing 请神经

Qita 七塔

Rangdin, Ladong 拉东

Rdangyan ར་ལེན།, Dongyuan 东元

Rgulang, Erh-ku-lung, dgon

lung byams pa gling རལ་པམ་པ་གླིང་།

ལུང་བྱམས་པ་གླིང་། Youningsi

佑宁寺

Rjanog, Beijing 北京

Rjawuu, rgyal po རྩལ་པོ།

Sangzanganbu, srong btsan

sgam po སྒང་པོ་བཅོན་སྐུ་པོ།

Songzanganbu 松赞干布

Sanjiaojing 三教经

Sangjijaxi, sangs rgyas bkra shis

སངས་རྒྱས་བརྒྱ་ཤིས།

sasa, tsatsa, tsha tsha ཚ་ཚ།

Semuhua, sems dpa' sprul sku

སེམས་དཔལ་སྤྱུ་སྤྱ།

Serihguang, Guanghui 广惠

Shaanxi 陕西

shangzi, shengzi 升子

Shaowa 勺哇

Shdangja, Dongjia 东家

Shdara, Dala 达拉

sheng 升

Shenjiao 神教

Shenxankuizi, shenxiankuizi

神仙魁子

Shge Smeen, Dasi 大寺

<i>shou</i> 寿	Wuuzin, Weiyuan 威远
Sichuan 四川	Xangtang, Xiangtang 享堂
Smeen, Ximi 西米	Xanjang, Shancheng 山城
Songduo 松多	Xemer, Xidatan 西大滩
<i>sruusibiiliduu</i> , <i>bianfu</i> 蝙蝠	Xewarishidi, Xiawaer 夏哇尔,
Sughua, Suobutan 索卜滩	Shibadonggou 十八洞沟
Sunrang, Xunrang 逊让	<i>xian</i> 县
Suonanjiasu, bsod nams rgya	Xishen Niangniang 喜神娘娘
mtsho བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱལ་མོ།	<i>xishenqi</i> 喜神旗
Szu, Anding 安定	Xojasitowa, shAkya thub pa མཛེས་ཀྱི་ཐུབ་པ།
Taizi 台子	ཐུབ་པ།
<i>taligha</i> , rtsam pa རྩམ་པ། <i>zanba</i> 糌粑	Xranghuali, Huangshui 湟水
Tang 唐	<i>xuanfu</i> 宣抚
thang ka ཐང་ཀ།	Xuangwa, Beizhuang 北庄
Tianzhu 天祝	<i>xuanwei</i> 宣慰
Tirijijinbu, thu'u ru gcen po ཐུ་འུ་རུ་གཅེན་པོ།	Xunhua 循化
ཐུ་གཅེན་པོ།	<i>yamen</i> 衙门
<i>tughuan</i> , Tuguan 土官	<i>yikang</i> , <i>shaokang</i> 烧炕
Tuhun 吐浑	Yongle 永乐
Turen Tai 土人台	<i>yuan</i> 元朝
<i>tusi</i> 土司	Yudanjiacuo, yon tan rgya
Wazari, Xining 西宁	mtsho བོད་དྲན་རྒྱལ་མོ།
Wanli 万历	Yushu 玉树, yul shul རྒྱལ་ལུ་ཤུ།
Wufeng 五峰	Zabazhuang, Zhabazhuang 扎巴庄
Wughuang, Bahong 巴洪	Zanghgua, Sangshige 桑士哥
Wushi 五十	Zhabaese 扎巴鄂色
Zhade (Zhuashidi), Baizhuazi 白抓子	

zhang 丈

Zhangye 张掖

Zhaxi, bkra shis རཀ་ཤིས།

Zhebang, 'bras spungs འབྲས་སྤུངས།

zhou 州